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Blair 'roadshow' to sell benefit reforms

Middle classes face means test by another name

By Philip Webster in Tokyo and Andrew Pierce

MINISTERS yesterday raised the prospect of means-testing for virtually all state benefits — although they prefer to talk about "affluence testing".

High earners, already braced for the possible taxation of child benefit, could lose disability benefits, while maternity benefit may be capped.

Harriet Harman, the Social Security Secretary, said that the issue of better-off people receiving benefits had been playing on her mind. "There has been a shift in the social security spending away from the poorest towards those further up the income scale... I'm sure that that can't be right."

At the same time, Tony Blair is talking about fundamental changes to the state pension to help poorer people. One idea is for all those entitled to income support to receive it as part of their pension — at the moment a million pensioners are not claiming the extra cash available to them.

The changes are under consideration as part of the Government's plans for the biggest welfare shake-up for fifty years and the Prime Minister is to lead senior colleagues on a national "roadshow" to try to persuade people of the need for change. The tour, reminiscent of his habit to scrap the Labour Party's Clause 4, will be launched in the Midlands on Thursday, two days after his return from Japan.

He said: "I want to go to the heart of the country and get to the heart of the matter and say to the people that welfare reform is not about increasing poverty or harming the poor. It is about helping the poor, those in genuine need, and making sure we have a system fit for the next century."



Harman: "Shift in spending away from poorest"

Ms Harman also wants to cap maternity benefit, which costs the Government about £500 million a year, to give more help to the low-paid. The Government reimburses employers 90 per cent of the salary they pay to women for the first six weeks of maternity leave, but those who earn less than £61 a week, and therefore pay no national insurance contributions, receive no help at all.

The reforms should, she suggested, require the better-off to pay for benefits for the poor. "People do not like the idea of a means test on the poor, but they may wear an afflu-

ence test, and that is one of the options that should be looked at," she said. "Do people want benefits all the way up the income scale, or is there a point when it is fair to say 'these people are so rich that we do not income to be distributed this way'?"

At the same time, more people are to be encouraged to take out a second pension to top up the state provision — possibly in schemes set up by trade unions and supermarkets. And Mr Blair indicated that the whole system was liable to change. "People are already providing for themselves privately far more," he told David Frost. "Now the role of government is going to be different from where it was, because if all the Government does is simply increase the amount of money of the basic pension, many of the poorest people do not benefit from that."

His aides would not enlarge on that, but he appeared to be hinting at the possibility of a two-tier system under which the value of the basic state pension as a proportion of income would, with a few exceptions, be offered for the poor.

It is also known that in the consideration of plans for second "stakeholder" pensions, the possibility of wealthier people being allowed to opt out of the state pension is being considered. The stakeholder pension is aimed at millions of people in part-time work who have drifted in and out of work. Ms Harman wants these people to be able to take out a portable pension with low administration charges — and that is where the supermarkets and the trades unions are expected to help, along with existing financial institutions.



Robin Cook and Gaynor Regan at Edinburgh airport yesterday on their way to Mr Cook's constituency

Defiant Cook says he intends to marry

By Andrew Pierce, Philip Webster and Gillian Harris

A DEFIANT Robin Cook declared his love for Gaynor Regan yesterday and announced that they intend to get married when his divorce is completed. The Foreign Secretary will put the official seal on their relationship when she accompanies him on an official trip to the White House this week.

Mr Cook, who travelled to his Edinburgh constituency with a grim-faced Mrs Regan by his side, said: "The only relationship I am having is with the woman I love and the woman I am going to marry. And I am getting married as soon as I am divorced. I have no intention of resigning. Nor have I been asked to."

The Foreign Office confirmed yesterday that Mrs Regan, 41, his Commons secretary, has moved into his official residence, No 1 Carlton Gardens, between Pall Mall and The Mall.

Mr Cook, 51, underdressed by criticism of his domestic arrangements, will take Mrs Regan with him on a ten-day world tour to discuss Britain's presidency of the European Union. They will fly to Washington, Canada, Hong Kong and China. The couple will stay in official residences such as ambassadors' homes during the trip.

On Thursday, they will meet Al Gore, Vice-President of the United States, in the White House which is their first port of call. President Clinton is not in Washington. They will fly from London on a British Airways flight and move on to Ottawa on Friday. They will return at the weekend before flying out again.

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John Wells dies at 61

John Wells, the satirist, playwright and actor, died yesterday, aged 61. He had suffered from lymphoma for 10 years.

Wells was one of the group of young men who resuscitated British satire in the 1960s. With Richard Ingrams he wrote the *Dear Bill* letters in *Private Eye* and for the stage which portrayed Sir Denis Thatcher as a golf-mad old soak. Yesterday Lady Thatcher said: "I am so sad. He brightened up our lives so much."

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Obituary, page 23

Blair struggles to keep Ulster peace on track

From Martin Fletcher in Belfast and Philip Webster in Tokyo

THE Stormont peace talks resume today having received a timely boost last night when the Progressive Unionist Party abandoned its threat to stay away.

Tony Blair was meanwhile in urgent long-distance telephone diplomacy from Tokyo in a bid to kickstart the deadlocked talks after a one-month break in which a spate of sectarian killings nearly wrecked the entire peace process.

The sectarian killings continued yesterday when the husband of Gerry Adams's niece was killed in an attack on a Belfast nightclub by the Loyalist Volunteer Force, a splinter group that opposes the talks.

London and Dublin see revised talks as the best way of countering the men of violence. Mr Blair was hoping the outline of a proposed

settlement broadly acceptable to both Unionists and nationalists could be agreed by the two governments and tabled as early as today, but important obstacles remained unresolved last night.

The DUP, which represents the paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force, decided to remain in the talks after the two governments promised greater consultation on confidence-building measures, which loyalists consider heavily skewed towards republicans. Its 35-member executive decided by a majority vote "to give both governments an opportunity to prove their sincerity".

Mr Blair is in constant contact with Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary, Bertie Ahern, the Irish Prime Minister, and other leading participants in an attempt to produce the outline that the parties were unable to agree in

US worries over Indonesia rescue

By Tom Rhodes and our foreign staff

AS SENIOR officials from the International Monetary Fund yesterday put pressure on the Indonesian regime to meet its demands for reform, a powerful American politician said that helping stricken Asian economies could be against America's national interest.

Senator Alfonse D'Amato, chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, gave a warning against releasing funds without real guarantees that they would follow other money "down the chute". He promised that his committee would hold hearings on the issue in two weeks.

As well as financial reforms, the IMF wants President Suharto's regime to end the monopolies run by members of his family and their friends. But one economist in Jakarta said that meeting all the IMF's demands might lead to "uncontrollable turmoil".

The Indonesian rupiah has lost 40 per cent of its value since the \$43 billion rescue package was agreed. Observers discounted the chances of Megawati Sukarnoputri, the symbolic opposition leader, succeeding in her weekend challenge to Mr Sukarno. But they said that her action might encourage others to speak out. Mrs Megawati said it would be irresponsible to renominate Mr Sukarno for a fresh term.

In Hong Kong, Peregrine Investments Holdings, one of Asia's largest independent merchant banks was fighting for survival after an initial failure to find fresh capital.

A spokesman for the bank said that talks were still going on with potential investors. Donald Tsang, the Hong Kong Financial Secretary, sought to calm fears that Peregrine's troubles would crush the battered market.

Hong Kong plea, page 48

Daffodils, skiers and hedgehogs think it's all over

By Kathryn Knight and Michael Horsney

BRITAIN enjoyed record January temperatures over the weekend with a warm spell that is expected to last until Wednesday.

The warmest spot yesterday was Prestatyn in north Wales at 17C (63F), while much of the rest of the country rivalled the Mediterranean with temperatures around 16C — eight or nine degrees higher than usual.

The unseasonal weather delighted surfers who crowded on to beaches in Devon and Cornwall to make the most of 15ft waves. But skiers were disappointed as the snow melted at Scotland's five winter sports centres, which experienced

the warmest January weather for thirty years.

The weather is also playing havoc with nature as plants and animals are being fooled into thinking that spring has already sprung. Daffodils and crocuses are emerging early, hedgehogs are coming out of hibernation and birds are bursting into song weeks early.

Bob Flowerdeux, the gardening broadcaster and author, said the warmth could be more of a curse than a blessing. "There is an old Saxon prayer which says 'preserve us from a mild January', because plants get forward and are then hit by the inevitable frosts."

Edwin Streather, a Northamptonshire farmer who has kept a weather diary for 50 years, said: "Since 1990 we have seen a

dramatic shift to higher temperatures. This year the growth of our 500 acres of cereals is about four weeks ahead of normal. Warmer weather has generally made cereals easier to harvest, but one drawback is that more harmful insects and bugs survive the winter, so that far bigger numbers are about in the spring and summer to attack crops."

The London Weather Centre said that temperatures would return to average levels by midweek. "It looks like it will be good until Tuesday when it will become windy. The winds will be increasing and becoming stormy — so the best thing is to enjoy it now because there is a bit of a cold snap ahead."

Forecast, page 24

In Esquire this month:

- "Ben Johnson took a stick to me. I got him in a hold and squeezed until he said OK, OK."
Lennox Lewis Esq
- "My legs haven't given out entirely. And my hair — well, my hair will probably outlive the human race."
Burt Reynolds Esq
- "Just as we're going live, Denise will reveal some coarse detail from her sex life to get me to crack up."
Johnny Vaughan Esq
- "Motörhead are actually a blues band — we just do it very, very fast."
Lenny Esq



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Lilley plots Commons assault on Robinson's trust

GEOFFREY ROBINSON, the Paymaster General, will face questions in the House of Commons this week for the first time since the controversy over his offshore trust began.

Peter Lilley, the Shadow Chancellor, will lead the attack at Treasury questions on Thursday as speculation grew last night that Mr Robinson would be moved in Tony Blair's first Cabinet reshuffle, expected in the spring.

The Prime Minister has emphasised that there is no question of Mr Robinson being forced to stand down over the disclosure of the Guernsey-based Orion Trust,

Paymaster General may be moved in Blair's first reshuffle, reports Andrew Pierce

which is a tax-avoidance vehicle. But Labour Party sources made clear last night that the prospect of Mr Robinson being moved to an alternative department such as Trade and Industry, was a serious option.

The Tories will use Thursday's questions to seek to embarrass Mr Robinson over the trust at a time when the Treasury is examining ways to close down tax-avoidance loopholes.

Mr Lilley is expected to repeat his demand that Mr Robinson should

stand down after it emerged that Mr Robinson had advised the trust to buy shares in a company he set up and chaired and Coventry City Football Club, of which he is a director. Mr Robinson had said he had no influence over the trust.

Mr Lilley said last night: "On Thursday Geoffrey Robinson for the first time will face the embarrassment of responding in Parliament to the questions he has so far pointedly refused to answer about his offshore trust. Until he answers satisfactorily those questions he

will remain an embarrassment to the Government and the Labour Party." If the Minister survives the Commons bombardment relatively intact Mr Blair may decide to keep him at the Treasury after all. "No firm decision has been made. He is a good Treasury Minister and doing a good job," a Labour Party source said. Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, has made clear he does not want to lose Mr Robinson.

Mr Robinson introduced the new Individual Savings Accounts which will penalise middle-income savers

by a new tax regime. The announcement was a public relations disaster.

"There is a perception that it is now difficult for Geoffrey to talk about savings and personal taxation. The £12 million trust was set up by the Swiss advisers of Joska Bourgeois, the wealthy Belgian divorcee. In 1996 two years after her death, Mr Robinson faces a potential tax bill of £5 million from the Belgian authorities as a principal heir to the estimated £35 million Bourgeois fortune. The trustees,

whom the minister has consistently declined to name, act independently of the Paymaster General according to the Treasury.

The Observer claimed yesterday that it had established firm links between Mr Robinson's personal financial advisers and the offshore trust. It reported that documents it had seen demonstrated a business relationship between Orion and Wilder Coe, the London firm of accountants that has acted for Mr Robinson for several years, through a company called Richmond Corporate Services.

Peers will keep seats after the Lords is abolished

By Philip Webster and James Landale

SOME of Britain's leading hereditary peers will continue to have a role in the new second chamber being planned by Labour, the Prime Minister suggested yesterday.

Star performers in the hereditary peerage, who are set to lose their voting rights within the next 18 months, are likely to be nominated as members of the new chamber.

With the Cabinet committee under Lord Irvine, the Lord Chancellor, meeting for the first time this week to draw up detailed reform plans, Mr Blair confirmed that he was thinking of a new chamber which would contain both an elected and nominated element. He confirmed that there would be a two-stage process with a short Bill being introduced to remove hereditary voting rights. This is expected in the next session of Parliament.

The second stage would involve the introduction of a democratic second chamber. Mr Blair said on BBC-TV's *Breakfast with Frost* that there was certainly a case for "transforming" some of the existing hereditary peers into nominated members who, as life peers can at the moment, would participate and vote in the second chamber.

The committee will have to decide what the new chamber should be called, which will then determine how its members are described. Mr Blair said: "It is important to start moving the system towards a more democratic form of second chamber. One of the advantages of the Lords is that you do get people of great calibre and experience, who have not spent all their life in politics, who contribute to public life as a result of being in the Lords, and we do not want to stop that."

"But it cannot be right that you have got these hereditary peers who can just be pulled out by the Tories — because they are virtually all Tories — at any time they want in order to vote something down or vote something in."

The Bill expelling the chamber's 600-plus hereditary peers is likely to be introduced in next autumn's Queen's Speech. Although the measure will run into fierce opposition in the Lords, most peers are resigned to accepting the move.

Diary, page 20

Loyalist gunmen murder relative of Adams

By Martin Fletcher

THE husband of Gerry Adams's niece was killed yesterday in a gun attack on a Belfast nightclub by the renege Loyalist Volunteer Force.

Terry Enright, a respected 28-year-old Catholic youth and community worker, was fatally wounded in the chest and stomach when two gunmen drew up in a car and opened fire on the popular Space club near the city centre shortly after midnight.

Mr Enright was one of six Protestant and Catholic door-men guarding the entrance. The Royal Ulster Constabulary could not say whether he had been specifically targeted or was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The LVF said the attack — its third in two weeks — was to avenge the recent murder of its leader, Billy Wright, by republican inmates at the Maze prison, but it appeared Mr Enright was also the victim of an increasingly deadly feud within loyalism.

The club is owned by the sister-in-law of David Ervine, the Progressive Unionist Party leader. Mr Ervine is a strong supporter of the peace process, which the LVF virulently op-

poses. He said the attack was the LVF's way of displaying "two fingers to me and all that I stand for".

In a statement claiming responsibility, the LVF said it was "not against peace, but not peace at any price". The Space club has a mixed clientele, but a woman with a Belfast accent telephoned Sky Television yesterday morning to point out its link with Mr Ervine. The red Ford Sierra used in the attack was later found burned out in a staunchly loyalist area of East Belfast.

The attack, on the eve of today's resumption of the Stormont peace talks, followed LVF "spray jobs" on two Catholic bars in the past fortnight that killed two men, injured ten others, and put great strain on the IRA ceasefire.

The LVF is a small but fast-growing organisation whose militancy is attracting recruits and assistance from disgruntled elements of both the LVF and the Ulster Defence Association, the other main loyalist paramilitary organisation observing the ceasefire. Mr Enright was a popular



Gerry Adams carries his great niece to the house of her murdered father, Terry Enright, after he was shot to death in Belfast yesterday

West Belfast community worker with two infant daughters and his murder was condemned by both Catholics and Protestants. His widow, Diandra, said her husband was killed because he was a Catholic and a nationalist.

"The gutless cowards who gunned him down killed someone very special. Unlike them Terry was working tirelessly for many years to bring

about peace, community harmony and a better life for all, especially young people," she said.

Mr Adams said Mr Enright's marriage to his niece was no excuse for killing him and spoke emotionally of his virtues. "He was heavily involved in community affairs with young people. He was a good — he probably thought a brilliant — Gaelic footballer

and he came from a community and a family who have suffered an awful lot."

Mr Ervine called the death of Mr Enright a tragedy. A fine young man with a vision for the future had been brutally killed "by those with no vision for the future."

Billy Hutchinson, a former terrorist who is now a senior member of the PUP, had known Mr Enright for seven

years. "Terry's job was to ensure his peers didn't get into any trouble and this is how he's rewarded. I just can't believe it."

"Outside his work all he was interested in was his family and making a living. That's why he took on this extra job. He needed the money for work on his house."

Paul Murphy, the Political Development Minister, called

the murder a "criminal and utterly senseless act" that advanced no cause.

David Andrews, the Irish Foreign Minister, said that all three LVF attacks were designed to wreck the peace process but insisted: "They will not be allowed to do so by the Irish and British Governments, by the talks participants and, indeed, by the public at large."

Defiant Cook says he intends to marry

Continued from page 1
next week on the Far Eastern leg of the tour.

Mrs Regan has also stayed with the Foreign Secretary at his grace-and-favour mansion at Chevening in Kent. When Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, came to stay over Christmas, Mrs Regan played host.

The latest disclosures came on the day the Prime Minister repeated his support for the Foreign Secretary. Mr Blair made clear in Tokyo that ministers caught up in personal troubles would not be sacrificed under his Government.

The controversy over Mr Cook erupted after his wife, Margaret, who is the mother of their two children, disclosed in an interview with *The Times* magazine that he had had several affairs during their 28-year marriage. Mrs Cook, a consultant haematologist, was told by the Foreign

Secretary that their marriage was over in the VIP lounge at Heathrow airport as they were about to start a holiday. Mr Cook told his wife after a telephone call from a Downing Street official who had been alerted that the *News of the World* was going to run

the story of his relationship with Mrs Regan.

The impact of the marriage break-up was underlined last night by the Foreign Secretary's mother, Christina Cook, 85, who spent Christmas with Margaret and her two grandsons in Edinburgh while the

Foreign Secretary was in Chevening.

Mrs Cook, who was married for 54 years to her late husband, Peter, a headmaster, said: "It was a terrible shock. If Robin's father was still alive, he would have been devastated. We are all so upset."

The couple have two sons, Christopher, 24, a trainee solicitor, and Andrew, 23, an electronics engineer. They are both deeply upset, said Mrs Cook, who lives in Edinburgh. "But they are sticking with their father."

"I never suspected any such thing was going on. I thought they had been happy. It is terrible after 28 years. You know, it happens in other families. But you do not think it will happen in yours."

Mrs Cook said she was proud of her son, her only child. But, she added: "It seems unfair. Margaret is more of a daughter than a daughter-in-law to me."

Margaret is a lovely girl and a wonderful mother. We spent Christmas together, but it was very sad. Margaret did all she could to make it happy for the boys."

AS THE failed marriage of the Foreign Secretary and Margaret Cook continues to come under the spotlight, some of Westminster's newest MPs disclose that their work is already taking its toll on their private lives.

The MPs, elected to Parliament last May, paint an often lonely picture of life as an MP, isolated from their friends and families. In a television documentary to be screened on Saturday.

Oona King, the 29-year-old Labour member for Bethnal Green and Bow, believes she is too often forced to put work before her three-year-old marriage to Tiberio Santomarcio, whom she met while he was working for an Italian MEP at

the European Parliament. As a result, their relationship is feeling the strain, she says.

"My family life has, unfortunately, evaporated. It is deeply unfunny. I barely see my husband at all... and he has stopped being quite as sympathetic as he was."

Julie Kirkbride, Tory MP for Bromsgrove, who last year married Andrew MacKay, the Shadow spokesman for Northern Ireland, says the job is all-consuming. "There are huge pressures on your time the whole time and organising yourself to cope with them all is quite a lot to learn. You have to be a bit patient with your staff and say I just can't do everything all at once."

In the BBC programme

House work puts pressure on new MPs' life at home

By Carol Midgley, Media Correspondent

Scrutiny: The Class of '97, the new MPs are shown struggling to familiarise themselves with the procedures of the House and battling to secure the most basic of equipment, such as a telephone.

Stephen Twigg, who ousted Michael Portillo from his Epsom Southgate seat, tells the programme that the hours worked by MPs are antisocial.

"It can be quite an isolated life. When you are out in the constituency as much as you can or coming in here to do paperwork you spend most of your time either with people who are working on the staff or on your own. You don't socialise much with people from your own party or from other parties."

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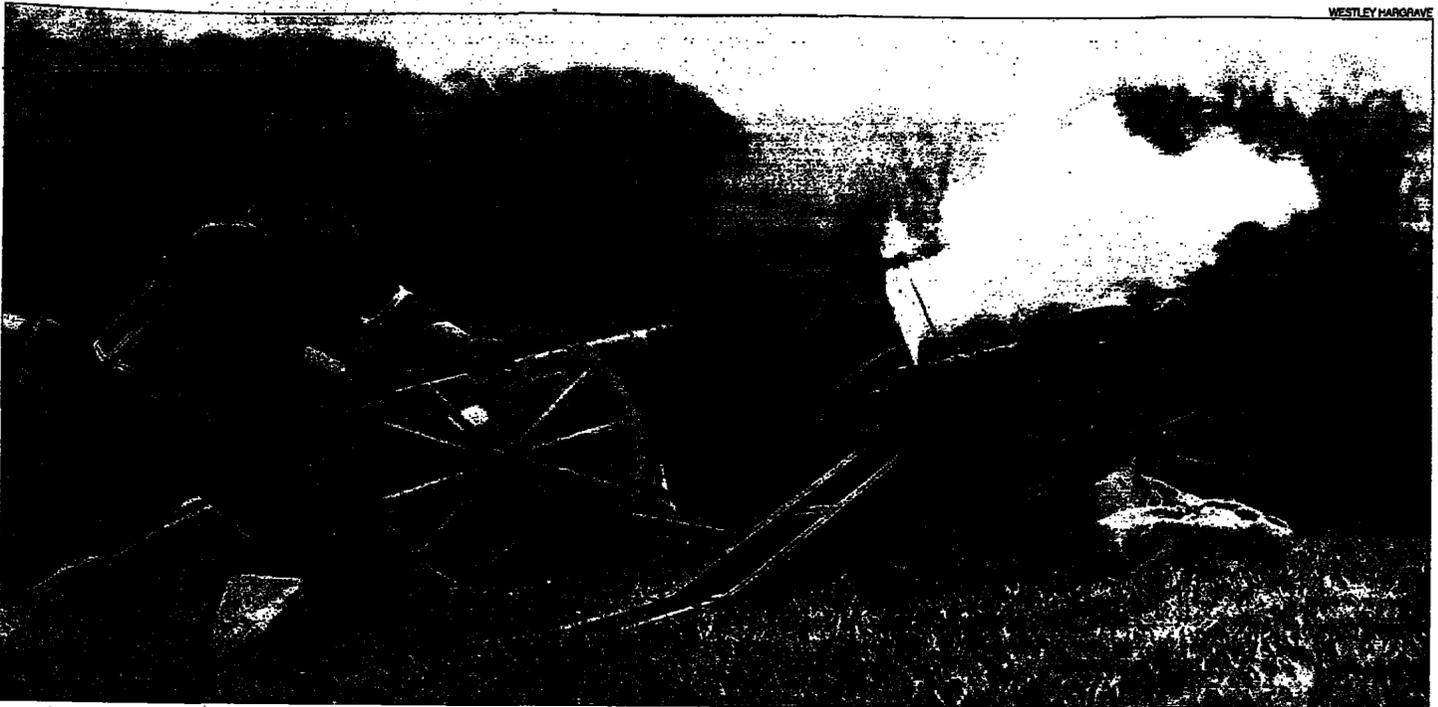
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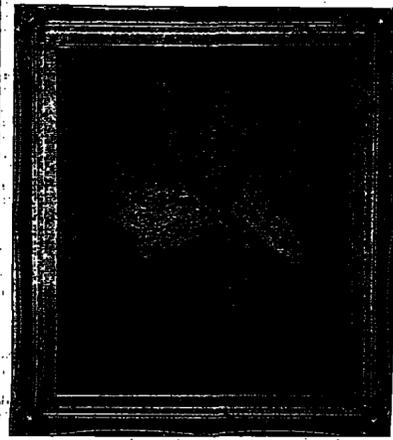
DELL

سكز لمن لا يملك

Laughing cavalier goes out with a bang



A farewell to arms: the ashes of the Colonel-in-Chief are fired from the cannon in the ruins of Donnington Castle. Below, a portrait of William Annetts, who was remembered as "full of fun"



Philip Delves Broughton on an historic departure from this life

THE last command of William Annetts was obeyed in cavalier fashion yesterday. In life, he was a jolly, joking Colonel-in-Chief in the Sealed Knot society, which re-enacts Civil War battles. In death, his last wish was for his ashes to be blown from a 17th century cannon.

Normally, the Sealed Knot fire ripped-up beer mats or cowpats from their cannon, but an order is an order. Mr Annetts, 71, who joined the society as an escape from the stresses of modern life, made his final escape to the winds at Donnington Castle after a memorial service conducted with ancient military honours.

In attendance were more than 100 solemn members of the Sealed Knot, in full Civil War regalia. The service had been organised by his widow, Joyce, who said: "This was a fitting and moving tribute to someone who loved his life and his service with the society." The former mechanic joined

the Sealed Knot as one of its founding members when he was 45, after his fencing instructor suggested that he try out his sword skills on the battlefield.

Mrs Annetts, 68, said: "He even got me into it. When he started he was just a lowly foot soldier and I was a wench. Eventually he made it to Colonel-in-Chief of the Royalist Earl Rivers Regiment and I was his lady.

"The society became his life and he used to travel all over the world to re-enact the battles. It used to get rid of the stresses of everyday life and he would come home a different person — although he suffered many war wounds during his years of service. It once took a nurse 11 weeks to extract a four-inch pellet from his thigh after he shot himself in the leg in a battle in Jersey."

Mr Annetts bought himself a sewing machine so that he could make his own authentic costumes. In an age

prone to forget, the society meticulously kept alive the spirit of battles and sieges from the Civil War.

The memorial service was conducted by the regimental chaplain, the Reverend John Cartwright, in the ruins of the castle near Mr Annetts' home in Newbury, Berkshire. Before the cannon was fired, the congregation were left in silence for two minutes to contemplate the commander's life.

Mr Annetts' cousin, Robert Blissett, 45, who took over the running of the regiment, led the procession of troops and mourners from the Three Horseshoes pub to the castle, which was bombarded by Cromwell's Ironsides in 1645 and defended for 20 months by the forces of Charles I, including members of the original Earl Rivers regiment.

"When you get dressed up you feel you are part of that era," Mr Blissett said. "Bill always felt that. It was more



Joyce Annetts: it was all a fitting tribute, she said

than in his blood. He felt that he was a Cavalier. He was a part of the 17th century way of life.

"There were a few tears, but we tried to keep the ceremony as upbeat as we could because Bill was full of life, full of fun, a very jolly person."

Record boss to be Royal Opera supremo

By CAROL MIDDLEY
MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

SIR Colin Southgate, the millionaire music businessman who signed up the Spice Girls, will tonight meet the outgoing board of the Royal Opera House in a move expected to rubber-stamp his appointment as its new chairman.

Although the board emphasised that the decision was not yet "cut and dried", Sir Colin is known to be the Culture Secretary's preferred appointment and most board members are relieved to have a candidate of his calibre.

Chris Smith was impressed by Sir Colin's crisis management skills as chairman of the EMI music group and approved his appointment last week. But the board has sole power over the chairmanship and some members have yet to meet Sir Colin.

He will succeed Lord Chadlington, who resigned last month after a damning report by the Commons Select Committee on Culture. The board also resigned. "It is possible and very likely that he will be appointed, but some members have never met him," said a source.

Sir Colin, 59, who is said to have modern tastes in music from opera to rap, recently described the five Spice Girls as "sex on ten legs". Becoming a millionaire in his thirties by developing computer software, his appointment will be a major departure from previous chairmen who have tended to be confirmed members of the opera set. He is an adviser to the Bank of England and on the shortlist for chairmanship at the National Westminster Bank.

Sir Colin, who earns £800,000 a year at EMI, is said to have been looking for a suitable public office role for several months but did not put himself forward to succeed Lord Gowrie as chairman of the Arts Council.

It is understood that post has been offered to Gerry Robinson, chairman of the Granada media group.

Business, page 48

Hospital snatch girl returned by mother

By KATHRYN KNIGHT

A YOUNG girl who was taken from her bed in a hospital burns unit has been returned to medical staff by her mother. Police launched a major hunt for 21-month-old Philomena McDonagh after she disappeared from a specialist ward in St Andrew's Hospital in Billericay, Essex, on Friday where she was awaiting treatment for burns covering her legs, chest and arm. Detectives had feared her family had taken her away against medical advice and fled to Ireland.

However, the baby's mother Winnie McDonagh returned her daughter to the hospital late on Saturday, 24 hours after she was taken. A spokesman for Essex Police said last night that Philomena's mother and father had removed their daughter from the ward but decided to bring her back. "They have not broken any law but we will be asking them for an explanation," he said.

Although Philomena was in no immediate danger doctors had feared she could suffer an infection if she did not receive medical attention as she was outside the clean, hospital environment.

Richard Allsopp, a hospital spokesman, said the baby was in good health and had suffered no ill-effects.

Woman stabbed to death in brawl at party

By MATTHEW BEARD

A YOUNG woman was stabbed to death and her boyfriend seriously injured when a mass brawl erupted during a 21st birthday party at a country pub. Rachel Long, 20, died from stomach wounds. She was on her first date with Mark Parker, 20, who was in a serious condition in hospital last night with stab wounds to the abdomen.

Customers at The Volunteer pub at Grove, Oxfordshire, said a fight involving 40 guests broke out shortly after midnight on Saturday. As the atmosphere calmed down the young couple were discovered on the floor of the main bar clutching their wounds. An eyewitness said: "The girl didn't appear too bad to start with and she was conscious and chatting to the paramedics. Then suddenly she collapsed unconscious and there was panic everywhere."

Ms Long, the manageress of a hairdressing salon from nearby Watlington, was taken by ambulance to the Radcliffe Infirmary in Oxford but was certified dead on arrival. Mr Parker, from Abingdon, underwent emergency surgery. Three men were arrested and were being interviewed at Didcot police station.

Last night the dead woman's mother, Christine, a



Long: was on her first date with Mark Parker

trainee teacher, said: "She had met Mark on Friday night and was taking him to a friend's 21st birthday party. Rachel was a very beautiful and bubbly person. That's not just me being a mum. She was gorgeous."

Her stepfather, Gary, a lorry driver, said police had told them little about the circumstances of the death. However, they believed Mr Parker had been attacked by somebody who was not invited to the party and Ms Long had intervened.

Detective Superintendent Trevor Davies, leading the inquiry, said: "This appears to have been a brutal and unprovoked attack on two young people enjoying a birthday party in the hitherto pleasant atmosphere."

Collection of Diana stamps to go on sale

By LIN JENKINS

A COLLECTION of stamps commemorating the life of Diana, Princess of Wales, in 100 portraits is being prepared. The Crown Agents Stamp Bureau, which acts as agent for 60 dependent territories, Commonwealth countries and others, said the stamps would begin to go on sale in March.

They will feature photographs tracing the Princess's life from a young girl through to last summer. Some are shown in *The Times* philately supplement tomorrow.

Final designs for the stamps have been approved. Those for Pitcairn, Tristan da Cunha and British Antarctic Territory will be completed for issue later in the year.

Nigel Fordham, head of the bureau, said: "The mock-up of the proposed design has already been sent to Kensington Palace and Buckingham Palace. We had originally planned to portray the life of the Princess systematically through the photographs but in the end we have decided to spread the photographs of different age groups across all the countries in no special order. The continuity of the omnibus is in the shaded colouring of the artwork border."

Collectors will be able to buy the set from dealers.

So farewell then, John Wells ...



John Wells, a man of many parts

THE tributes for John Wells, the satirist, playwright and actor, who died yesterday morning, were similarly affectionate and effusive from friends and those he sent up for a living.

Even though he portrayed her husband Sir Denis as a golf-mad, reactionary old soak, through *Private Eye's* Dear Bill letters and on stage in the play *Anyone for Denis?* Baroness Thatcher said yesterday on hearing of Wells's death: "I am so sad. He brightened up our lives so much."

He was a prized dinner party guest and was a particular favourite of Princess Margaret. She would sometimes call the offices of *Private Eye* in person to speak to him, asking for "Jawn Wells".

Buckingham Palace said yesterday that the Princess was "deeply saddened" to hear of his death.

Wells was first diagnosed with lymphoma more than ten years ago, but appeared to have seen it off. His brother-in-law, the journalist Alexander Chancellor, said yesterday: "He had been in remission but then it came back with a vengeance last year."

Richard Ingrams, who co-wrote the *Dear Bill* letters with Wells, said yesterday: "He was a very easy person to work with and we always wrote them very quickly. It was really the most successful feature that *Private Eye* ever had."

Obituary, page 23

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Mandelson keeps Experience hopes high

Daniel McGrory reports as Dome director quits over 'dictator' tactics



Mandelson said he was optimistic about the project

PETER MANDELSON yesterday denied behaving like a "dictator" in his handling of the Millennium Dome project. His remarks came as the so-called "Dome Affairs" Minister defended himself against a withering public attack by Stephen Bayley, who resigned at the weekend as the Dome's creative director saying he feared it would turn out to be an embarrassing failure.

The design consultant accused the Minister without Portfolio of being too easily swayed by public opinion and said the state-owned New Millennium Experience Company was run like a Soviet dictatorship.

This latest public controversy over the £758 million project prompted Francis Maude, the Shadow Culture Secretary, to call on Mr Mandelson when the Commons resumes today to explain what he is doing with the money.

Mr Maude described the weekend's resignation and subsequent public squabble as "very worrying indeed". He said there were "already concerns that the success of this important project has been jeopardised by the high-hand-

ed and arrogant way that Peter Mandelson has run it".

Yesterday Mr Mandelson said he was optimistic about the project and dismissed Mr Bayley's remarks. "I have not been a dictator but I have been decisive and I have got a grip on a project that was suffering from drift. The Millennium company has a first-rate chief executive and team working with her but earlier last year the last government was not providing the leadership they needed to do their job well. Mr Bayley's other remarks do not merit a response."

Former colleagues of Mr

Bayley were swift last night to dismiss his criticisms as "the final ravings of a bitter man who would sulk if he didn't get his own way". One associate said: "He never got the idea of being a team-player and had trouble dealing with the fact that not all his ideas would be accepted."

Many MPs had questioned why the former university lecturer and author was being paid £90,000 for his three-days-a-week consultancy. In the increasingly vitriolic exchanges over the weekend the former creative director's parting shot was to predict that the

project could turn out to be "crap".

What will concern ministers more is Mr Bayley's assertion that he could have created a "stunning" exhibition for only £100 million.

Mr Bayley, a founding director of Sir Terence Conran's Design Museum, said: "I don't like political interference and they don't like creative advice so it's completely undo-able from my point of view."

The consultant said he was tired of his views being ignored by Mr Mandelson and the Millennium Commission. "The whole way it is being run is pure East Germany. I get memos from the Millennium Commission talking about the 'creative task force'. It's awful... and absolutely scary."

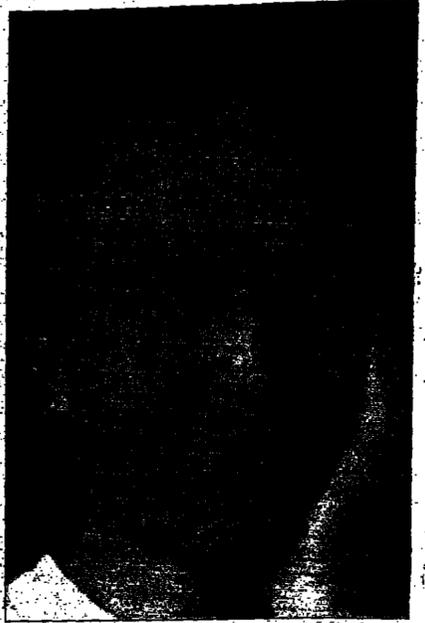
Mr Mandelson is known to have been greatly annoyed by some of Mr Bayley's public outbursts, which included describing the whole idea of the Dome as "extraordinarily quaint" and suggesting that a massive tree-planting programme might have been a more appropriate way to mark the millennium.

Michael Binyon, page 18

COUNTING DOWN TO ZERO HOUR

Models of some Dome exhibits will go on show at the end of next month to try to generate more sponsorship beyond a handful of promises from the likes of British Airways, Swatch and a consortium of City institutions. A recent opinion poll found that four out of five people believe the project is a waste of money.

After a visit to Disney World, Peter Mandelson said the central area could resemble Main Street USA but organisers emphasise that that has still to be decided. Avenues will branch out to exhibition areas on the themes of where we live, what we do and what we are. Exhibitions will include rides, interactive games and virtual reality shows. Ten thousand visitors at a time will watch a live show based on a journey through time.



Bayley was said to have no time for Mandelson

Creative type who lived up to his billing

THOSE who know Stephen Bayley rightly predicted that the Millennium Dome, as big as it is, could never accommodate both his ego and that of Peter Mandelson (Daniel McGrory writes).

Soon after the Minister without Portfolio was appointed to oversee construction of the Dome, the creative director told close associates that one of them would have to go. He added if it was to be him, he would not leave quietly.

Brash, suave and possessed of extreme self-confidence, Mr Bayley's own publicity material would emphasise a description of himself from a decade ago as "the second most intelligent man in Britain". He has never said who was the first but he assured everyone it was certainly not Mr Mandelson.

One associate said last night: "He had no time for Mandelson and his self-promotion, which is ironic because both have huge egos and are convinced they know best. There wasn't room inside that Dome for both of them."

Mr Bayley glosses over what he describes as his "modest upbringing" in Liverpool and his education at Quarry Bank School and

MAN IN THE NEWS

Manchester University. He came to prominence as director of the Victoria and Albert Museum's Boilerhouse project in the 80's, putting on crowd-pulling exhibitions on the design of the Ford Sierra and Coca-Cola bottles. He became the first director of the Design Museum before departing suddenly in what he described as "an existential funk".

For the past eight years he has been a magazine writer and author as well as design consultant for a number of companies. He was recruited for his £80,000-a-year role by Bill Muirhead, the then communications director for the Millennium Experience.

Mr Bayley, 46, has been married for 15 years to Flo, a graphic designer and illustrator. They live with their two children, Bruno, 11 and Coco, 10, in South London.

Opinionated and intolerant, he always emphasised that he did not need the fee the Dome was offering him. Many in the New Millennium Experience Company claim he spent increasingly little time on the Dome and more on his other lucrative consultancies.

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MI5 decides that democracy is safe

The war on subversives appears to be over, reports Michael Evans

MI5 is preparing to make it official that counter-subversion operations have been assigned to the scrapheap of history, indicating that there are no individuals or organisations currently deemed to pose a threat to parliamentary democracy.

The once-thriving F branch of the Security Service, which in its heyday investigated the extreme Left and extreme Right, is now reduced to "half" a desk officer who concerns himself with the pensions of former employees. Even two years ago counter-subversion work accounted for about 3 per cent of MI5's £140 million

budget. Today it is less than 1 per cent and falling.

An acknowledgement that this line of MI5 business has gone out of fashion will be made clear in the third edition of the Security Service booklet to be published in March. The booklet will also try to remove "myths" about MI5 investigations into trade unions, anti-nuclear groups and political radicals. It will be acknowledged that some individuals within certain groups were suspected of indulging in covert anti-democracy activities

but wholesale tapping of phones, mail interception and break-ins is denied.

The new edition will try to dispel the impression given by the late Peter Wright, the former MI5 officer, in his book *Spycatcher* that the Security Service was bugging and "bugging" its way around the country in the 1950s and 1960s. As part of the process of destroying unwanted files on suspected subversive individuals and organisations, Stephen Lander, the Director-General, will also make it

clear that he is engaged in shredding thousands of files that are no longer relevant.

MI5 began destroying files on individuals in 1992 but the process has been accelerated. Mr Lander hopes he will be allowed to publish how many personal files are left in the archives. That will depend on a decision by Jack Straw, the Home Secretary. There are believed to be between 250,000 and 300,000 files in the archives at different levels of accessibility and interest. Many drawn up as part of

MI5's responsibility for vetting potential government workers.

Mr Lander, however, will not be giving details about the number of files held on suspected terrorists and spies, since that information is regarded as highly sensitive. Some of the old files will have to be kept for their historical interest under the 1988 Public Record Act and any files also have to remain in the registry because of the requirement under the 1989 Security Ser-

vice Act for MI5 to hand over all the relevant documents in cases where members of the public have made a formal complaint against the service.

David Shayler, a former MI5 officer, claimed last August that the Security Service still had a file on Peter Mandelson, Minister without Portfolio, from his days as a member of the Young Communists League and on Mr Straw from when he was president of the National Union of Students. Mr Shayler, who is living abroad, is being investigated by Special Branch over a suspected breach of the Official Secrets Act.

Plan for London mayor 'allows no power'

By Mark Henderson

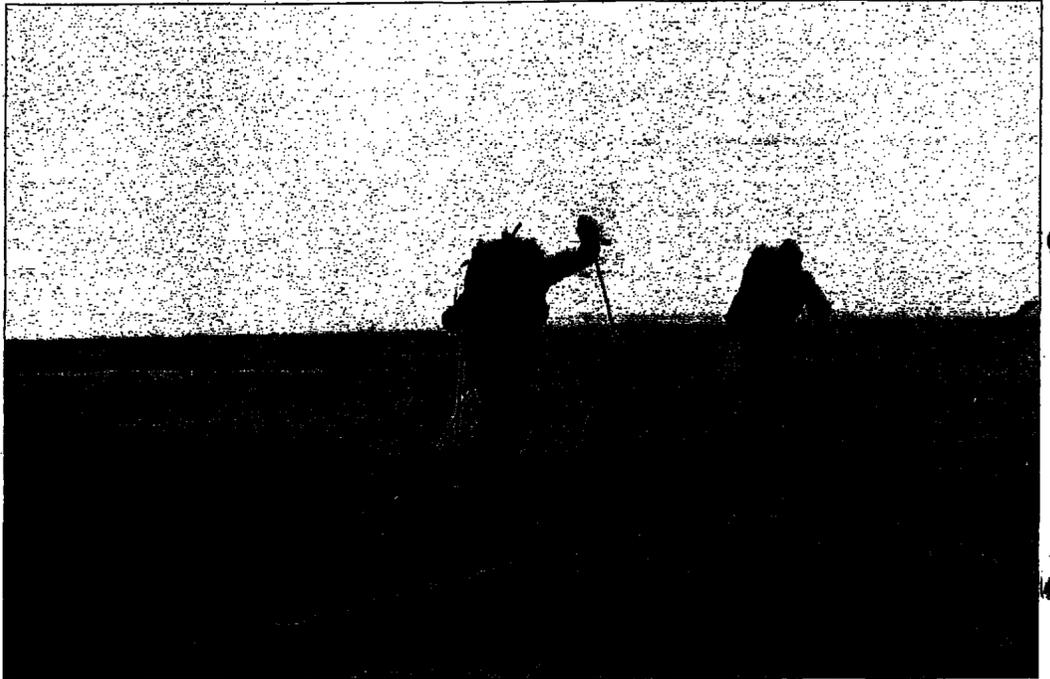
THE elected London mayor proposed by the Government will have few strengths in common with American city mayors, a report for a centre-right think-tank says today.

The Politeia report by Tim Hames, a political writer on *The Times*, finds that mayors of big American cities such as New York's admired Rudolf Giuliani, can achieve sweeping change through their right to hire and fire key officials, veto council motions, and administer budgets with little interference from city councils.

Under proposals in the Green Paper *New Leadership for London*, an elected assembly would be able to amend the mayor's budget, approve appointments and oversee agencies such as the proposed London Transport Authority.

Dr Hames concludes: "If current plans are followed, the new Mayor of London will have powers that are compromised from the outset." A White Paper of final proposals is to be published in March, to be put to a referendum of Londoners in May. Dr Hames argues that the White Paper should either dispense with the idea of an elected assembly, replacing it with a forum comprising the leaders of the 32 London boroughs and the chairman of the Corporation of London, or give it modest powers that do not handicap the mayor.

Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare, a possible Tory candidate for the post, called on the Government to rethink proposals in line with Dr Hames's argument. However, Ken Livingstone, who was Labour leader of the Greater London Council, said: "The pamphlet omits the need for checks and balances. I would love to know whether you would trust me with these dictatorial powers."



Commandos Sean Chapple and Alan Chambers will answer children's questions throughout their 80-day expedition to the North Pole

Pupils keep Web-watch on Polar walkers

By Michael Evans, Defence Correspondent

TWO Royal Marine commandos who plan to be the first Britons to walk "unsupported" to the North Pole are to be linked throughout their 80-day expedition to schoolchildren running a "polar watch" Website on the Internet.

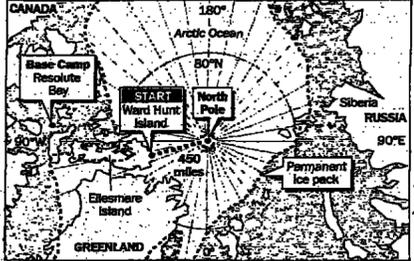
Sergeant Sean Chapple of 42 Commando and Corporal Alan Chambers of 40 Commando will answer questions from children around the country in a weekly telephone call to the base camp at Resolute Bay in Canada.

The two commandos will not be allowed to receive any information about weather conditions ahead of them because the expedition is to be unsupported but they have agreed to reveal all about

their progress. A comprehensive school in Sussex, the Robertsbridge Community College, will be running the Website and will collate all the questions from the 45,000 schools and colleges linked by the Internet.

The questions will be passed on to the base camp where Corporal Jason Garland, 27, of the Royal Marines' Special Boat Service, will relay them in a weekly radio call to the commandos.

The schoolchildren's plan to walk to the Pole on the Internet, dreamt up by Kevin Hayter, their music teacher, has added a new dimension to the expedition which, if successful, will be only the second time that a team has



walked unsupported to the North Pole. A two-man Russian and Canadian team achieved it in 1994.

Sergeant Chapple, 30, and Corporal Chambers, 29, who are both single, have designed

their sledges so that they can be converted into an amphibious raft when they are faced with a break in the ice and an expanse of water.

The two commandos, who took part in the first walk

across Iceland from the west to the east coast in 1995, aim to set off for the Pole on March 1. Sergeant Chapple said they would take enough food for 82 days but anticipated that during blizzard conditions, when walking would be impossible, they would "bed down" in their survival tent and would need little food.

Although the journey to the North Pole from Ward Hunt Island, where they will be dropped off by aircraft, is about 450 miles, the two commandos will walk at least 700 miles on their skis.

Mr Hayter plans to take ten children from the Robertsbridge school to Resolute Bay and also for a day trip to the Magnetic North Pole, 600 miles from the geographical North Pole.

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We're normal too, Cambridge tells blacks and Asians

By DAVID CHARTER, EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

CAMBRIDGE has its "geeky" and "pretentious" students but there are also lots and lots of completely normal people, black and Asian teenagers are told in a special prospectus for the ancient university.

The first prospectus for ethnic minority applicants written in "youth speak" explains that students do not have to be a superbrain to go to Cambridge. It also says, tempting by "The terms are amongst the shortest of any university in the UK and the vacations are among the longest."

The prospectus will be sent to schools targeted by the Group to Encourage Ethnic Minority Applicants (Gema), funded by the university's colleges.

A Cambridge spokeswoman said the vernacular style was

chosen to appeal directly to teenagers. "It had to be written in the language of young people who are 17 rather than simply explaining procedures. It really does very well in setting the right tone for people who are at school."

Cambridge, like Oxford, has been stung by criticism that it does not do enough to attract students from state schools and ethnic minorities. An analysis of this year's intake at the two universities by the Sutton Trust, an educational charity, has shown that only 20 per cent came from comprehensive schools.

Joheda Ali, the Gema officer, said she hoped the prospectus would help to raise the proportion of ethnic-minority students at Cambridge from 8 to 11 per cent, the

national average. Ms Ali, 23, graduated last year after reaching Cambridge from Tower Hamlets College in East London. She said the colloquial style was the right approach to reach black and Asian teenagers.

"The prospectus is very snazzy and very modern and the language is aimed at the youth. If you were seen in Tower Hamlets with a formal prospectus people would just laugh at you."

"They would think it was a big joke. But if they see someone reading this one, they would be keen to read it themselves."

The prospectus, written by students from Cambridge's Black and Asian Caucus, contains advice on admissions and interviews and summaries of the subjects available. It adds: "The social side of university life may well take a while getting used to, in that it mainly revolves around college bars. But most people not from public school backgrounds find adjusting a gradual process."

"Just as there are many black people who might find Cambridge boring as hell, there will always be a proportion of deeply untrendy black people who will blend in perfectly and who could not name a rap artist if you paid them."

There is also reassurance about small-group teaching. "Supervisions are not intended to intimidate you. You might be in the unfortunate situation of having supervisions with a complete genius, but don't assume that if you don't understand what is going on in supervisions, that you must be the stupid one."

Yauhan Gethin, black students officer for the National Union of Students, said: "It is good to see that the high prestige part of the system is making an effort."

Ethnic graduates who found fame

THREE of Cambridge's best-known ethnic-minority graduates have welcomed the new initiative (David Charter writes). Keith Vaz, Gonville and Caius 1976-79, and Labour MP for Leicester East, said: "I strongly support this. There are a lot of Asian pupils in some of the best public schools who get good grades but somehow it does not seem to translate into Oxbridge places. I don't think state schools always think of Oxbridge as an attainable aspiration. Cambridge was the three years when I have been least conscious of racism."

Diane Abbott, Newham 1972-75, and Labour MP for Hackney, said: "I think it is as much a class issue as much as a race issue. As well as raising students' expectations you have to concentrate on raising standards in schools. When I took the entrance exam for



Vaz: supportive

Cambridge, my teachers tried to dissuade me."

Konnie Huo, Robinson 1993-96, and the first Asian presenter of *Blue Peter*, said: "Loads of people do not think of trying for Cambridge or Oxford. People should be represented from every social strata."



The yellow line on the 1761 map clearly shows the islands on the New Hampshire side of the border

Fine line redefines state of the union for American taxpayers

By HELEN JOHNSTONE

A MAP which for centuries gathered dust in the attic of an English country house has become vital evidence in a multimillion-pound American lawsuit being fought by two American states.

When a Hampshire archivist showed it to a trade mission from America on a tour of Winchester council archives, New Hampshire's governor could not believe her luck. The map provided the crucial proof the state had been seeking for 30 years in an escalating dispute with neighbouring Maine. Copies of the map were immediately posted back to New Hampshire's legal chief.

The two states are fighting over possession of America's oldest naval shipyard, built in

1800 on an island in the middle of the Piscataqua River which divides the two states.

The dispute began in 1969 when Maine started taxing New Hampshire residents working at the Portsmouth Naval shipyard. The map, which shows America's north eastern area in detail, carries a pale yellow line marking out the border between the rival states, clearly showing that the island falls in New Hampshire.

The 1761 map was discovered two years ago hidden away in the attic of Greywell Hill House, near Basingstoke, the ancestral home of Sir Guy Carleton, who had a long and illustrious military career in North America before returning to Hampshire



Sir Guy Carleton

in 1796 to retire. As Governor of Quebec between 1775 and 1778 he successfully organised the defence of the colony against American troops. In 1782 he was appointed Commander in Chief

in America and stayed in New York until the end of the American Revolution.

Rosemary Dunhill, the Hampshire archivist who showed the map to the visiting delegation, said: "I only remembered this atlas at the last minute when I was preparing for the delegation's visit. I thought they would like to see a map of their area but I never had any idea what excitement it would cause."

Jeanne Shaheen, the New Hampshire governor, said: "We are delighted as we think the discovery could be very important in the court case. It could be crucial."

Judy Reardon, her legal adviser, said New Hampshire would not benefit financially if it won the case because the state did not charge residents income tax.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Baby found by youths kicking box

A group of youths kicked a cardboard box down a street in Batley, West Yorkshire, not knowing there was a newborn baby in it until they heard cries coming from the box.

Inside was a girl, just hours old, dressed in a blue frilly dress. The baby was taken to Dewsbury and District Hospital but was found to be unharmed. Police found the baby's 39-year-old mother a few hours later. She was also taken to hospital.

£32m drug haul

Two men from West Yorkshire have been charged over 160 kg of cocaine, worth £32 million, found in the wheels of a Land Rover at a British Customs check on its way from France through the Channel Tunnel.

Smuggling rise

The number of illegal immigrants intercepted while being brought into the country by organised gangs almost doubled last year to 666. Police and immigration officials say total figure smuggled in may be ten times higher.

Fakes boom

Trade in fake goods could be worth £300 million a year, damaging firms, tax revenue and safety, Dr Andrew Clark of the School of Law, University of Warwick, says in an Economic and Social Research Council report.

Walker dies

Fergus Ugoed-Thomas, 50, a barrister from northwest London, died after falling 300ft down a mountain ridge on Crib Goch in Snowdonia yesterday. He was with a group of walkers from the Midland Association of Mountaineers.

Name and rank

Promotion for two PCs in Blackpool means Bispham police station will have sergeants Andy Sergeant and Andy Sargent on its strength. Lancashire Constabulary is also home to Chief Inspector Alfred Hitchcock.

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Family reunion for man who lost memory in war

Detective work by a woman who befriended a tramp has led to his past being uncovered, writes Lin Jenkins



A family album portrait of Borg aged 18 in Malta

A MAN who lost his memory when his ship was torpedoed in the Second World War and ended up as a tramp sleeping rough has been reunited with his Maltese family after inhabitants of a seaside resort appealed through newspapers and television for information about his past.

Tony Borg, 79, has spent a decade living in shop doorways in Sidmouth, Devon, but could remember little about his origins.

Now he has met his sister Rosina, a nun in Malta, after 60 years. She remembers her brother emigrating to America in 1938 and being informed during the war that he was missing when his boat was sunk in the English Channel.

Details of what happened during the intervening years are scant, although people in Sidmouth recall him living rough for at least a decade.

Tony speaks only broken English and cannot remember how long he has been in the country. He has no recollection of his ship sinking. He is believed to have joined the American merchant navy and suffered brain damage when his ship was sunk some time in 1940 or 1941. He has some recollection of working in a car factory.

Joyce Prosser, who befriended him after seeing him beg-



Tony Borg strolling with his sister Rosina in a Devon lane yesterday; and, right, Rosina at the age of 10

ging outside a supermarket, said she was amazed that the detective work had traced his family. When she realised he was Maltese, letters and photographs were sent to newspapers and a video shown on local television.

Now that he has met his sister again, Tony, or Georgio as he was originally called, is able to recall nicknames of people in their home village of Quormi and pick out their mother in photographs.

Rosina said: "I am 99 per cent sure this is my brother. There are so many similarities. We were told Georgio was missing but I never believed he was dead, and I have always prayed for him rather than for his soul."

"I never thought I would see my brother again and this is a dream come true. It was just wonderful to hug him again. We hope we can help him now and bring him home."

Tony said: "I have seen the photographs and I know I am in them and I know the other people in them. I would like to go back to Malta but I like Sidmouth. It is very good to see my sister again."

Rosina was accompanied by her cousin Nancy Cassar, who is also convinced that Tony is the long-lost Georgio. "It is unbelievable that he has been found after so many years, but we must do something to help him. He is a man, not a dog, and should not be living

outside. It horrifies us that he is living as a vagrant. He wants shelter and he seems keen to come home to Malta where we can help him."

Mrs Prosser said: "Tony says he wants to go home but he is scared of flying. If we can clean him up and get him on a plane, we will take him out there for a few weeks to see if he likes it."



Retrial for teacher jailed over her aunt's murder

By Frances Gibb, Legal Correspondent

AN ELDERLY music teacher serving life for the murder of her aunt faces a retrial tomorrow after the emergence of medical evidence that was not put before the jury that jailed her in 1993.

Shelja Bowler, 68, who has served 4½ years of a 12-year sentence, was released on bail in July last year after Lord Bingham of Cornhill, the Lord Chief Justice, and two other senior judges, ordered a retrial.

The judges had been told that the original jury that convicted Bowler was not given the chance of considering that Florence Jackson, an aunt of Bowler's late husband, may have died by accident.

Mrs Jackson was found drowned in the River Brede near Rye, East Sussex, in May 1992. Bowler had collected her

from an old people's home in Winchelsea and was taking her home for the week-end. The car broke down and, according to Bowler, she went for help and returned half an hour later to find her relative missing.

The next morning, Mrs Jackson's body was found in the River Brede, 500 yards away, and Bowler was accused of her murder. The inheritance of a flat thought to be worth £30,000 was thought to be the motive.

At the core of the case is the question of whether Mrs Jackson was capable of walking to the river unaided. At Bowler's trial, both prosecution and defence accepted that this was impossible.

After a sustained campaign by Bowler's supporters, led by Tim Devlin, son of the late

Lord Devlin, the law lord, and his wife Angela, who had known Bowler for 15 years, as well as a team from Channel 4's *Trial and Error*, fresh evidence was put to the Court of Appeal from a leading expert in geriatric behaviour. This suggested that Mrs Jackson could very well have walked to the river with the aid of her walking stick.

Bowler's original appeal in April 1995 failed after the court did not allow the airing of the new evidence of the geriatrician.

A factor in the ordering of the re-trial is thought to be a submission from the leading lawyer George Carman, QC, that from the outset it was assumed that Mrs Jackson had been murdered, and the possibility of an accident was never considered.

Depressed nurse moved from cell

By Daniel McGrory

DEBORAH PARRY, the British nurse accused of murdering an Australian colleague in Saudi Arabia, has been moved to a prison hospital after doctors became concerned at her depressed and suicidal state.

She is said to be depressed over the prison conditions and the delay of the Saudi courts in returning a verdict. An official at the British Embassy who visited her at the Dammam prison in Dharhan said: "She's been finding it difficult to cope with the conditions."

He said Ms Parry had been under a lot of stress and was under observation at the hospital. Doctors have not said how long she will remain there.

There have been reports that Ms Parry, 38, from Alton, Hampshire, has attempted

suicide on a number of occasions since she was arrested in December 1996 accused of murdering Yvonne Gilford. One source said: "She has been depressed for some time and has had psychiatric treatment and medication. Recently her bouts of depression have become worse and doctors are worried she may attempt to take her own life."

A "blood money" deal with Miss Gilford's brother has spared her from the death penalty if, as her lawyers anticipate, the Saudi court finds her guilty of murder. But despite repeated assurances that she will not face execution Ms Parry is said to be haunted by the threat of being beheaded and suffers repeated nightmares.

"Deborah needs to know what is going to happen to her. Neither her lawyers nor her family nor even the diplomats have been given any clue as to when the court will give its verdict," the source said. "The latest rumour circulating the prison that has added to her depression is that she faces a 15-year jail sentence. The delay is tormenting her. She is literally going out of her mind."



Parry said to have attempted suicide

Woman sues over silicone implant

By Lin Jenkins

A MOTHER whose children suffer from suspected silicone implant poisoning has won legal aid to sue the manufacturers in the High Court.

Mary Bowler, 26, is believed to be the first woman in Britain to get the go-ahead to seek compensation through the courts. The families of 50 other children are awaiting the result of the case before deciding if they will sue.

Mrs Bowler's 21-month-old daughter Daniella suffers from chronic stomach cramps, skin problems and is allergic to many foods. Her mother believes that she was poisoned in the womb and when breast fed as a result of a breast implant carried out in 1993.

Mrs Bowler had the implant on medical advice when one of her breasts failed to develop. The implants are

made of liquid and silicone gel which separate when the implant reaches body temperature. Doctors say the liquid can leak into the bloodstream. In the United States, where many women are suing for damages, the silicone implants are now illegal and plastic surgeons use a type filled with a saline solution.

Mrs Bowler, of North Walsham, Norfolk, did not breast feed her first child, but did her daughter after medical advice. However, she soon became concerned about her daughter's health. She read about silicone implant poisoning and recognised the symptoms as those displayed by her baby.

More than 13,000 Britons have registered for group actions in the American courts against the manufacturers.

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Asia bailout 'would hurt US'



Fischer: Jakarta talks 'only just beginning'

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON AND A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT IN JAKARTA

THE Republican chairman of the US Senate banking committee said last night a joint White House and International Monetary Fund emergency rescue package for Asia was against US interests.

Alfonse D'Amato described the Administration's support for a \$43 billion (£26 billion) package for Asian banks as a programme to help "undisciplined private-sector corporations with [American] taxpayers' money". He added that his committee would hold hearings on the issue as soon as Congress returns from its recess in two weeks' time.

Washington has said it will accelerate the bailout if President Suharto swiftly implements economic reforms. Indonesia's troubles are causing jitters in world markets and sent British and US share prices into a nosedive on Friday.

IMF officials met Indonesian ministers in Jakarta yesterday to urge President Suharto's administration to reverse the economic meltdown. The talks began amid speculation that political tension in Indonesia might force the IMF to drop some of its demands.

Indonesians were still digesting the news that Megawati Sukarnoputri, the symbolic leader of the opposition movement, had urged that Mr Suharto should not be nominated as a candidate in March's presidential election.

Stanley Fischer, the IMF's first deputy managing director, met five ministers and announced progress, but added "this is only the beginning". Several IMF officials, including Mr Fischer, have said the slow pace of reform was further eroding market confidence in Indonesia and other South-East Asian countries.

Indonesia's currency, the rupiah, has lost more than 70 per cent of its value in six months. The IMF wants assurances that Mr Suharto will restructure the chaotic and poorly regulated financial sector and dismantle the system of monopolies and preferential treatment given to businesses run by his family and cronies.

Marie Mohammad, the Finance Minister, said the discussions were "quite fruitful, productive and quite impressive". He added that he was optimistic Jakarta's financial markets would not repeat last week's collapse when they open today.

However, analysts are not convinced that the meetings with the IMF, and later this week with an American delegation led by Lawrence Summers, the deputy Treasury secretary, will produce a solution.



Marie Mohammad, Indonesia's Finance Minister, trying to brush past reporters after yesterday's meeting with the IMF officials

There must be serious differences between the two sides or else the IMF would not have had to come back," one economist in Jakarta said. The Indonesian side would be arguing that the economic crisis had deteriorated so seriously since the rescue deal was announced in October that the risk of social unrest precluded implementing all the reforms agreed then, he added.

"Taking all the IMF medicine might well lead to turmoil on an uncontrollable level." Ministers did not respond to Mrs Megawati's challenge to Mr Suharto. But the ban on television companies showing

her speech on Saturday, and the refusal to allow foreign broadcasters to send pictures of it abroad, are raising fears that Indonesia's facade of political unity is about to crumble.

Mrs Megawati said it would be "unwise and irresponsible" for anyone to renegade Mr Suharto as a candidate for March's elections and declared her readiness to assume the presidency. Her remarks were carefully worded as it is a criminal offence in Indonesia to openly criticise the head of state or demand his overthrow.

Political analysts said yesterday that it would currently not be possible for Mrs Megawati, ousted as leader of the Indonesian Democratic Party in a government-sponsored party coup in 1996, to become President but that her actions might act as a catalyst for others.

Marzuki Darusman, a human rights campaigner, said: "She is throwing down an



Mrs Megawati speaking out at the weekend

unprecedented challenge which might give accepted political figures the courage to speak out." In Washington, Mr D'Amato said: "I don't think we can just willy-nilly make monies available without there being some very real discipline and guarantees that these monies are not following other money down the proverbial chute. We're talking about some situations where I don't believe the IMF has sufficient funding, nor can we bring it up, to bail some of these countries out. Indeed, I think it may be against our national interest in some cases."

The US/IMF package relies on legislation pending before Congress that would make an extra \$3.5 billion available to the IMF for emergency lending, as well as \$15 billion to cover the US share of a quota increase to replenish the fund's accounts, depleted by Asian loans.

"Usually not more than 2 per cent of the population contemplate suicide," he said. "Now it has increased to 4 per cent. More than 3 per cent of those laid off have suicidal thoughts. In only six months, the country's mental health situation has deteriorated rapidly." A new opinion poll last week of 1,186 respondents in Bangkok found that 17 per cent of those surveyed were contemplating suicide.

Analysts say the picture remains bleak, despite a seemingly competent new Government under Chuan Leekpai, the Prime Minister, who took office last November. He has given a warning of the possibility of millions more becoming unemployed.

Financial crisis pushes Thais over the edge

FROM JAMES PRINGLE IN BANGKOK

AN EPIDEMIC of suicides has accompanied Thailand's financial collapse, which has seen rising unemployment, the halving in value of the baht and bank collapses.

One 25-year-old broker, facing a salary cut and large debts, smoked a final cigarette then jumped to his death from a Bangkok high-rise; a former provincial governor and adviser to the last Prime Minister shot himself in a police station lavatory after his property business went bankrupt.

"I have met desperate company owners who break down in tears right in front of me," an American banker said. "These once-bullish and energetic businessmen are in a state of shock and I don't see how they will get their drive and optimism back."

A Western diplomat said: "The people shooting themselves are the yuppies who are the new poor. This recession started at the top among the people who were overpaid in the first place in the financial sector and real estate, the people now turning in their leased Mercedes and cellular phones."

The number of suicides among the 60 million population has doubled in a year, and those checking into public health clinics has shot up 30 per cent in three months. Thirawat Seriwansan, the Deputy Minister of Public Health, has announced an increase in mental health clinics nationally from 80 to 150. A ministry survey late last year showed that 5.8 per cent of those in property and 2.3 per cent in finance had thought about suicide.

Yongyudh Wongphromsarn, a psychiatrist with the ministry, said that in the early 1990s, the suicide rate was less than five per 100,000. Since the crisis, it had grown to eight per 100,000, between tea and a dozen daily. This was still a lower rate than many countries, perhaps because of Thailand's Buddhist religion. However, Dr Yongyudh said comparatively few cases were reported to the authorities because of the stigma attached to suicide, and he said there were likely to be many more.

STRESS POINTS

THE Thai public health ministry has issued a stress checklist:

- Depressed, melancholic or tired.
- Highly pessimistic and lacking hope, despair.
- Memory loss.
- Inability to concentrate, exhaustion.
- Easily irritated, feeling upset, frequent arguments with others.
- Loss of appetite.
- Anxiety leading to insomnia.
- Slow movement.
- Loss of sex drive, weight or giddiness.
- Heart palpitations and stomach ache.
- Sweating heavily.
- A shaky voice, moist lips and hands when under pressure.
- Smoking more often.
- Taking more tranquillisers.
- Easily bored with work.
- Wanting to avoid social contact.
- No longer interested in films, hobbies and other pastimes.
- Feelings of being unappreciated, excessive fear of making mistakes.
- Feeling of being threatened by unfamiliar situations.
- Migraine, pain or muscular spasm in the back of the neck, back or shoulders.

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Youthful Blair's economic vision thrills Japanese

FROM ROBERT WHYMANT IN TOKYO

TONY BLAIR yesterday looked adoring crowds in Tokyo as if running for election — and many Japanese despairing of their own ineffectual leaders said they wished that were the case.

Outbreaks of what one television station dubbed "Blair fever" greeted his every move in public at the weekend. Sunday shoppers erupted into spontaneous cheers when he visited a Tokyo department store to promote British goods. On Saturday, in nearby Kamakura, he had pressed the flesh of delighted temple-goers all desperate to have their photographs taken with the Blair in front of the Great Buddha statue.

In freezing weather yesterday, he was mobbed by dozens of screaming women students and housewives when he tried his hand at pounding rice dough the traditional way — by swinging a huge mallet at the goosy mixture used to make rice cakes. "He's so young, so good-looking, so energetic," cooed one young woman attending the Japan-British Society's *mochitsuki* (rice-bashing) party on the lawn of the British Embassy.

given customary Japanese reserve and indifference to visiting politicians. But if he is being fêted like a pop star by the crowds, he is also being listened to like an oracle by worried businessmen, who complain that their own Government is dithering in the midst of the country's worst postwar economic crisis.

After an impressive interview with Japan's TV Asahi yesterday, in which he talked up Britain as a "dynamic and innovative" economy, and urged Japan to open its financial system to restore confidence, Mr Blair found himself widely hailed as a guru. "He's very wise, very flexible," said Hiroyuki Kotani, a senior executive with a semiconductor company. "You British are very lucky, Japan has no leaders with his kind of vision."

Mr Blair advised the Japanese leadership to follow the example of the Big Bang that had opened Britain's financial system to more scrutiny. "I think that the more open the financial system is, the easier it is for international investors to have confidence in it," he said.

cher, whose toughness towards unions won her many admirers in Japan's business community, may be switching allegiance. "I always thought Japan needed a strong leader like Mrs Thatcher," said Terumake Koyama, adviser to a leading accountancy firm. "But now I think Mr Blair is better suited to shaking us out of our inertia."

Mr Blair arrived in Japan on Friday for a five-day visit to discuss trade and the turmoil sweeping through Asia's economies with government and business leaders. He is due to meet Ryutaro Hashimoto, the Prime Minister, today and the issue of compensation for British former prisoners of war is expected to figure in their talks.

In part, the enthusiasm for Mr Blair reflects the growing despair of the Japanese with their own politicians, mainly old men seen as feeble and corrupt. Many blame Mr Hashimoto for the economic plight of the nation, but the opposition parties are in disarray and offer no alternative. "It may sound astonishing, but if Mr Blair could run for election in Japan at the present time I think he would win," said Mr Kotani.



Tony Blair pounds steamed rice for cakes during new year celebrations at the British Embassy in Tokyo

Chinese quake victims face big freeze

FROM CHARLES HUTZLER IN NANTAN

CHINA sent tents, medicine, food and clothing yesterday to villages flamed by a powerful earthquake near the Great Wall that killed at least 50 people and left tens of thousands homeless in the bitter winter.

Xinhua, China's state-run news agency, sharply increased its figure for the number of injured in Saturday's tremor to 11,439. It said 1,252 were seriously hurt. The quake measured 6.2 on the Richter scale.

In Nantian, one of scores of villages affected, farmers terrified that their quake-damaged earth and brick homes would collapse spent the night huddled under hastily erected lean-tos. "We had no choice but to sleep outside. If there's another quake, my house could fall down," said one farmer, whose family of six slept in their yard without a fire or stove in below-freezing temperatures.

A web of cracks covered the walls in all three rooms of the family's single-storey home. The quake toppled tens of thousands of buildings across two counties in the Yan mountains, leaving more than 44,000 people homeless and shaking buildings 150 miles to the south in Beijing, Xinhua said.

About 100,000 houses collapsed or were too damaged to live in, said a State Seismological Bureau official. Temperatures plunged to -20C (-4F), Xinhua said.

The state-run China Youth Daily quoted a local official as saying that frostbite and cold were expected. "We need a lot of tents," he added.

Convoy of trucks, vans and buses carried relief supplies to the stricken area yesterday. They included 1,200 tents, 21,985 winter overcoats and quilts, food and medicine, Xinhua said. Military units in Beijing sent four helicopters to airlift 30 tonnes of food along with medical teams and more than 1,500 soldiers. (AP)

Picture, page 24

Film's bare essentials put Sheffield's assets on the tourist map



Carlyle Japan's women would like to see more

SHEFFIELD may find an influx of tourists from Japan prowling its streets after the phenomenal success in Japan of the British film *The Full Monty*.

The city is unlikely ever to displace Stratford-on-Avon as the premier attraction outside London for Japanese package tours. But inspired by the heart-lifting story about male strippers — now playing to full houses in Tokyo — many Japanese are keen to track down the abandoned steel plants and working men's clubs that formed the backdrop to the film.

The Japanese have a well-earned reputation as tenacious film and literary tourists. Over the years, countless Japanese couples have trekked to Carnforth, in Lancashire, searching for the railway station

'The Full Monty' has struck a chord in a nation with its hidden army of redundant managers, Robert Whymant reports

shown in *Brief Encounter*, the 1945 film romance starring Trevor Howard and Celia Johnson.

"Seeing *The Full Monty* makes me want to stop off in Sheffield when I visit the Bronze country this summer," said Mineko Ikehashi, 35, a financial analyst, Haworth, near Bradford, is already a popular destination for legions of Japanese fans of the novel *Wuthering Heights*.

Another female cinegoer was more entranced by the film's male

leads than the desolate landscape of housing estates. "I don't expect there's a lot to see in Sheffield," said Tomoko Ebina, 20, a university student of English. "But if there really is a place with people like Robert Carlyle doing male stripping, I think a lot of people would go."

Despite the actors' thick regional accents and subtitles which cannot convey the humour of the dialogue, the film remains astonishingly accessible to Japanese audiences. The indomitable spirit of the unem-

ployed men who turn to stripping has struck a chord in a nation where no virtue is more highly prized than that of *gambaru* (never giving up).

In particular, middle-aged men identify with the Tom Wilkinson character, a former supervisor who cannot bring himself to tell his wife he has been made redundant. Japan has long had its hidden army of former middle managers who leave home every morning, too ashamed to admit they no longer have a job.

But Tokyo audiences at the weekend were mostly chic young women. Male strippers are still a rarity in Japan, but the Chippendales and other ensembles of foreign males (local men are apparently too shy to undress on stage) have whetted appetites. Japanese women, expected to put on a demure show in

society, are delighted to find nightspots where they can ogle men without giggling behind their hands. But already they are demanding more.

Meanwhile, *Za Furu Monchi*, as it is pronounced in Japan, looks like joining thousands of other English words and phrases digested whole by the Japanese language, after Tony Blair's endorsement of the film in a major speech to businessmen in Tokyo last Friday. The Prime Minister, who has not seen the film himself, underlined Britain's determination "to go the full monty" in putting the economy on a secure footing for the 21st century.

"It's one of those English phrases that invariably catch on with trendy Japanese," said Hideaki Kase, a writer and political commentator.

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Israel on alert after warning of suicide bombs

By Christopher Walker in Jerusalem

THOUSANDS of Israeli soldiers and police were put on red alert in main cities yesterday after an intelligence warning that Islamic extremists are planning suicide attacks to coincide with the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Yitzhak Mordechai, the Defence Minister, told Israeli television the security forces had received information that Islamic terrorists planned an attack in a major city, but no specific location had been mentioned. Avigdor Kahalani, the Interior Security Minister, said Israel knew of plans for an attack similar to those in Jerusalem last July and September that claimed 21 lives.

In Damascus, Muhammad Nazal, spokesman for Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, confirmed more attacks were planned. "We have chosen the path of violent resistance," he said.

The alert, which caused public anxiety, came as a stalemate in the peace process continued. Emergency talks at the White House between President Clinton, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, and Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian Authority President, are scheduled for January 20 and 22. "The meetings in Washington represent the last chance to rescue the peace process," said Ahmed Abdel-Rahman, General Secretary of the Palestinian Cabinet.

□ Torture ruling: The Israeli Supreme Court yesterday refused to bar interrogators from tying a detainee onto a tilted stool with his hands cuffed behind his back, a sack over his head and loud music blasting in his ears. The 5-4 decision came in a case brought by two Palestinian detainees, who say the treatment is torture. (AP)

Legacy of Gandhi invoked by widow for polls

From Christopher Thomas in Srirampadur

SONIA GANDHI, the new icon of Indian politics, ended seven years of silence yesterday to enter the election fray and attempt to revive the spirit of the defunct Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, which ruled for more than 40 years.

She conveyed personal bitterness and sorrow over the death of her husband, Rajiv, the Prime Minister assassinated in 1991, dispelling the festive mood with a performance of dark gravity. She told the crowd she was speaking on soil made sacred by the blood of her husband, a martyr for the cause of the nation's unity and integrity. "The passage of time has not made it easier to be here," she said.

Mrs Gandhi, 51, observed that she was surrounded by security, but in 1991 her husband had stood on almost the same spot, unprotected and alone. "My heart is still feeling that deep emotion. My husband was the centre of my life and existence," she added, pausing for her Italian-accented English to be translated into Tamil. The crowd fell silent.

Before speaking she visited the exact spot nearby where a

female suicide bomber, smiling and offering a garland, approached Gandhi and blew him to pieces. It has been turned into a memorial park and Mrs Gandhi, accompanied by her daughter, Priyanka, 26, quickly and silently walked around a glass structure encasing a permanent flame and a large picture of Gandhi.

The two women scattered rose and jasmine petals, cupped their hands in a few moments' homage and strode off to launch the Congress Party's election campaign. It was an orchestrated event, designed to tug at the nation's heartstrings.

Mrs Gandhi's speech was peppered with the names of Jawaharlal Nehru and the Gandhis, doubtless using the party's illustrious past to hide its sordid present. Priyanka's presence on the stage sent a message that she might be interested in trying to revive the dynasty and, with it, the fortunes of a moribund party. Her brother, Rahul, who lives in London, evidently has no inclination to return home. At one point Priyanka grabbed the microphone to announce



A Congress worker pleads with Sonia Gandhi yesterday to contest the election

that she would be working hard for "the hand" — the Congress symbol.

It would take a remarkable change of fortune to save the party from an electoral mauling, however, given the contempt in which it is widely held. In the 1996 poll it put in its worst performance: this time it could be all but destroyed.

Mrs Gandhi criticised the decline in "principles and values in public life", which

will doubtless rekindle memories of the corruption of the Gandhi rulers.

Mrs Gandhi, speaking against a backdrop of huge paintings of herself, her husband and Indira, attacked politicians who exploited caste and religion — a swipe at the Hindu hardline Bharatiya Janata Party, which looks set to improve its parliamentary position.

She made no allusion to the growing clamour for her to

take over the party presidency and to contest the northern Indian constituency of Rai Bareilly, which Indira represented. But clearly the party is hers if she wants it.

The next big public event will be in Bangalore this week. The organisers are promising a crowd of 500,000 to hear the woman who is known to most simply as Madam, and to some of her sycophantic admirers as Lakshmi, goddess of good fortune.

WORLD IN BRIEF

Migrant suspects arrested in Turkey

Istanbul: Police arrested more than 1,300 people yesterday in an increased effort to stem the flow of illegal migrants through Turkey to Western Europe. The Anatolian news agency said that more than 1,000 of the detainees were foreign citizens.

Police said that 210 of those detained were from the mainly Kurdish north of Iraq. Others were from Azerbaijan, Iran and various African and Asian countries. "Some of them were arrested for lack of identification, some on suspicion that they were intending to be smuggled out of the country and others for different reasons," a police source said. Turkey has been under pressure from Europe to tighten its borders since a wave of migrants, many of them Kurds from Turkey, Iraq and Iran, began arriving on the coast of Italy in recent weeks. (Reuters)

UN tests Iraqi co-operation

The United Nations sent an inspection team into Iraq at the weekend to test Baghdad's readiness to co-operate with its search for banned weapons of mass destruction in preparation for a visit by Richard Butler, the chief UN weapons inspector (James Bone writes). Iraq immediately objected to the composition of the new 16-member UN team, saying it was dominated by nine Americans and five Britons.

British archaeologist feted

Athens: The British School of Archaeology in Athens will shortly issue an appeal to raise more than £1 million for centenary celebrations of the discovery of the Minoan palace of Knossos on Crete in 1900 (John Carr writes). The centenary is to honour the British archaeologist, Sir Arthur Evans, right, who first dug into a mysterious mound near the port town of Heraklion, and stumbled on the oldest extant example of royal architecture in Europe, dating back to almost 2000 BC.



Algeria death toll rises

Algiers: Algerian security forces said yesterday that 11 more people had been killed at the weekend by a "terrorist group" in Bouira province. In a statement to the AFS Algerian news agency, they said one wounded person survived. The victims had their throats cut or were hacked to death. About 1,000 people have been killed since the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan on December 30. (Reuters) Letters, page 21

Prince clashes with journalist

Hanover: Prince Ernst August of Hanover, 43, left, beat up a television journalist who confronted him as he and Princess Caroline of Monaco, with whom he has been romantically linked, were leaving a weekend fundraising dinner, German police said. The journalist, who suffered a broken nose and other face and head injuries, said he had not been on the Prince's property and indicated he would take legal action. Prince Ernst said he acted as his privacy was threatened. (AFP)

Indians face up to laugh-in

Bombay: More than 7,000 Indians met here yesterday — just for a laugh. Members of more than 100 "laughter clubs" marked World Laughter Day with a 15-minute guffaw. Organiser Madan Kataria said two years ago he and friends started by telling jokes, but ran out of clean ones and now found the best way to laugh was "to look at each other's faces". (AFP)

Shia mourners killed in Lahore extremist attack

From Zahid Hussain in Karachi

GUNMEN opened fire on more than 100 Shia Muslim mourners at a cemetery in Lahore yesterday, killing at least 24 and wounding 40.

Four assailants fired indiscriminately with automatic weapons for several minutes during prayers, before fleeing in an open vehicle. Witnesses said the

firing was so intense that there was little chance of escape.

Twenty people, including an old woman and a child, died on the spot, the others in hospital. Doctors said the toll would rise as many of the wounded were in critical condition.

No one has claimed responsibility, but police suspect Sipah-e-Sahaba, an extremist Sunni organisation, of what was the worst sectarian killing this

year. Clashes between the two main Muslim sects have resulted in hundreds of deaths over the past few years.

Shia leaders have accused the provincial administration of supporting extremist Sunni groups, and vowed to take revenge. Protesters chanted anti-government slogans as police arrived at the site of the attack.

No arrests have been made. Reports said tension mounted in other parts of

Punjab province. Heavily armed police and paramilitary troops were deployed at mosques and other religious centres.

The latest attack came just a few weeks after five militants of Sipah-e-Sahaba, facing trial on charges of murder and terrorism, escaped from a jail in the southern Punjab town of Dera Ghazi Khan. Police suspect that they may have been involved in yesterday's killing.

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Sea ready to give up its riches

Huge reserves of valuable minerals are set to be scooped from the ocean bed, reports Nigel Hawkes

Mining companies are about to follow the oil giants to the bottom of the sea. An Australian company has been granted a claim to huge reserves of zinc, copper, silver and gold bubbling up from the sea bed off the coast of Papua New Guinea.

The figures it quotes are mouth-watering. "If you found this deposit on dry land, you would call these bonanza figures," says Dr Ray Binns of Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), who was one of those responsible for the original find.

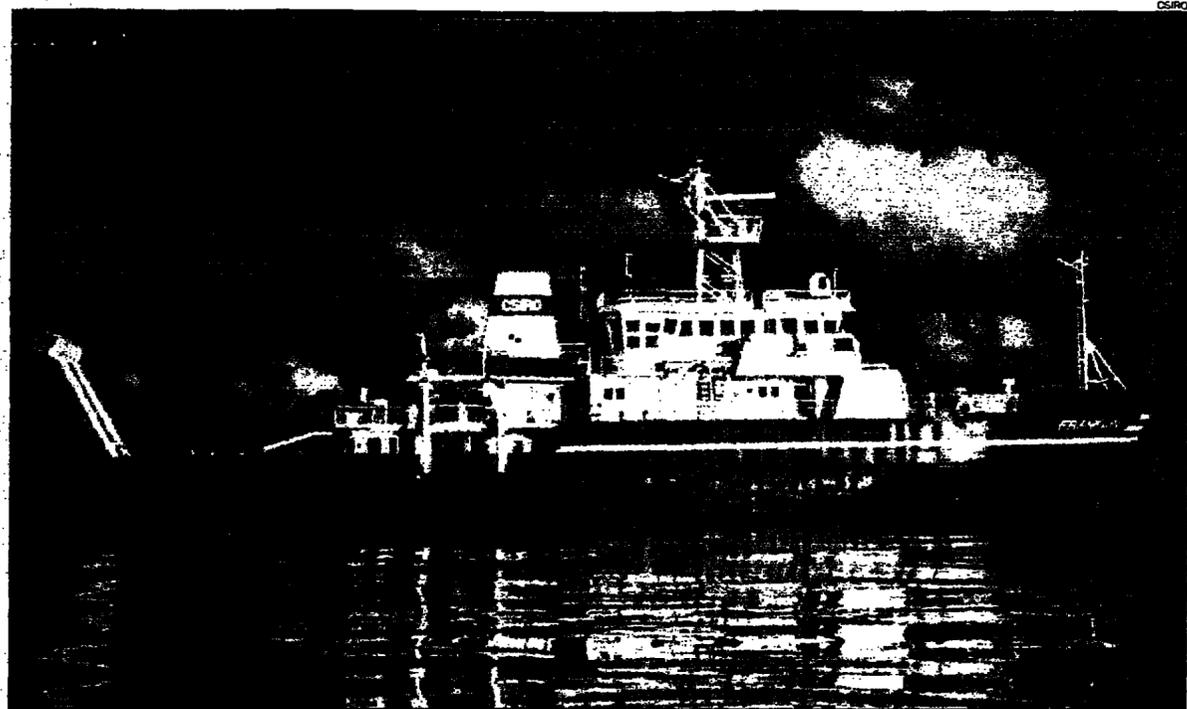
Julian Malnic, chief executive of Nautilus Minerals Corporation, the company granted rights over nearly 2,000 miles of the sea bed by the Papua New Guinea Government, says the deposits are "utterly compelling". The amounts of metals that could be raised are unlimited, he says.



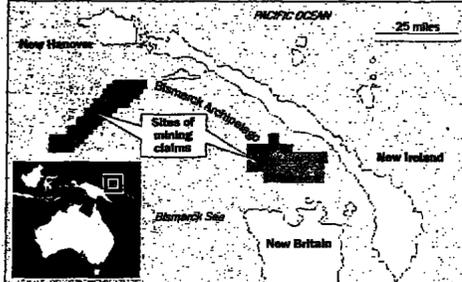
copper, 200g of silver to the tonne, and 1g of gold. The only problem is that they are a mile down.

Nevertheless, Mr Loudon believes that the technology is available to mine the ore. "We have been talking to a British company, Blue Water Constructions, which has used a drill-ship and a large grab to recover precious cargoes from wrecks, including gold and silver ingots," he says.

To environmentalists, the story has a familiar ring. Back in the 1970s, everybody got excited over plans to mine the potato-sized nodules of manganese that had been found littering the ocean bed.



The Saticanic Mills chimney in the Bismarck Sea, left, and the research vessel Franklin, above



ganease caused such a flurry that nobody suspected what they were really doing until much later — by which time they had tried, and failed, to raise the sub.

were smoothly distributed throughout the crust, mining any of them would be exceedingly difficult. Fortunately, the processes taking place over billions of years have tended to concentrate minerals in seams.

Steven Scott, working from the CSIRO research vessel Franklin. On a further cruise in 1995, the chimneys, including one nicknamed Saticanic Mills, were sampled and analysed.

will depend on whether it can produce a plan for exploiting the minerals with the least possible environmental damage.

EVIDENCE that Alzheimer's disease is caused by genetic mutations is mounting. But new research suggests that not only faults in the genes, but mistakes in the process by which they are translated into proteins can lead to the insoluble "plaques" in the brains of Alzheimer's patients.

New leads on Alzheimer's

genetic mutation in Alzheimer's patients. A team from America and Spain found that changes in the gene responsible for making a

protein-called APOE increase the risk of getting the disease by a factor of four. The genetic change increases the amount of APOE which is produced, which in turn increases the amount of another protein,



SCIENCE BRIEFING Nigel Hawkes

The Dutch team tested people with Alzheimer's to see whether their brains contained two faulty proteins attributable to this mutation. They did the same for people with Down's syndrome, who develop early Alzheimer's symptoms.

THE Gobi Desert has proved a wonderful find for dinosaur collectors over the past 30 years. Among the best of finds, by palaeontologists from the American Museum of Natural History, was a well-preserved oviraptor actually sitting on its eggs.

gy, says that the sandstone in which the fossils are found lacks the layered structure of wind-blown sand. It includes large pebbles which could not have been blown.

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ABOVE: aqua beaded chiffon dress, £205
 RIGHT: chunky sequin sweater with zip-up collar, £83

ABOVE: black crombie, £118, and black scoop-neck dress, £42
 RIGHT: black wool and mohair mix trouser suit, £388, stretch cotton fitted shirt, £75



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London style, Italian finesse



The new "funny face" of fashion, Audrey Marnay, in a sheer black beaded vest, £103, and black drawstring pants, £115

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CHANGING TIMES

Audrey Marnay is the new "funny face" of fashion — a 16-year-old French girl from Charentes, just outside Paris, whose individuality has caught the imagination of photographers and designers. Her elfin features are reminiscent not only of Audrey Hepburn, but also Twiggy.

It was the Twiggy connection that made her such an obvious choice when Sportmax was seeking a face for its spring/summer advertising campaign.

Though part of the Italian MaxMara group, the Sportmax label was launched in 1968 in response to the Swinging London phenomenon and has always taken inspiration from the quirky, individual spirit of our fashion scene.

The pendulum has swung back again in our direction and the latest collection is more heavily influenced than ever by the British attitude to clothes. For us, clothes should never be too neat.

While the Italians and French might specialise in perfect co-ordination, our approach has always been more haphazard. The typical Englishwoman wears her favourite items all at once. The effect is more medley than ensemble.

Of course, we've come a long way since the Sixties, when British fashion all seemed slightly breathless. It is now difficult to hear the words Carnaby Street without thinking of Austin Powers leaping about in his striped drapes and calling out "Groovy, baby" to his bevy of models.

The London scene is thankfully cooler now — more intellectual brainstorming in

The Sportmax label has designs on a Swinging London revival. Style Editor Grace Bradberry reports

East End lofts, less PVC minis on the King's Road. We've been cultivating a more minimal look of late. Designers have also come round to our way of thinking. Interesting one-off pieces — the perfect beaded top, the luxury sweater with a quirky neckline — are what everyone is talking about at the moment. But the trick is to go easy with the detail — a funny little top with plain trousers, an "interesting" shirt with a simple dark suit. The look is sparse and modern, but with a touch of artiness about it — a perfect mix of New York and London styling.

The latest collection includes a blue sequined sweater that fuses glitz with grunge in a way that is to die for. There are wide-legged drawstring pants — one of the key shapes of the summer — and a sharp black crombie. The white pant suit is as slouchy as they come, and there's also a sensational white muslin Twenties-style flapper dress with butterfly flaps at the side.

Given its origins, it should come as no surprise that Sportmax has always sold well over here — so much so that Selfridges recently created a new space for the label, which contains the largest selection sold anywhere in the world — and is the only place where the label is not sold side by side with MaxMara.

"It's about a younger woman — or a younger-at-heart woman," says Paul

notion of adventurous is different from that of our continental cousins. While the quirkier extremes of Sportmax may appear perfectly wearable to us, the French, say, might think differently.

"The London customer is fashion-conscious but also quite unpredictable. In some other European countries the young people can be more conservative, more bourgeois," says Luigi Maramotti, vice-chairman of MaxMara.

"London is very interesting because of the contradiction between the very conventional and the very unconventional approaches to fashion that you find there. It's also more dynamic than a lot of other places."

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The private life of Gordon Brown

GORDON BROWN: THE BIOGRAPHY

In day two of our serialisation of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's biography, Paul Routledge tells how Gordon Brown became a 'victim of his own reticence' when rumours about his personal life began to spread

Sue Lawley entertained Gordon Brown on the BBC's imaginary desert island on March 3, 1996. It proved to be the most controversial *Desert Island Discs* in the programme's 54-year history, because the show's presenter questioned the Shadow Chancellor about his private life in such a way that his sexuality was made an issue. She speculated that when a man was middle-aged and unmarried — as Brown is — "people think you are gay or have a personality flaw".

The ground is always well prepared for this flagship Radio 4 programme. Given the scale of editorial preparation, it is unlikely that the BBC was unaware that, for several years, rumours about Brown's sexuality had circulated at Westminster. The suggestion that he might be gay was bandied about chiefly by political journalists, often reporters for Scottish newspapers who claimed to be "in the know" about some dark secret from his years in Edinburgh. "Not a shred of evidence was ever produced for these allegations, which those who know him well — and they are few in number — knew were false. In a sense, he was a victim of his own reticence."

So Lawley plunged in. Brown was patient. "His mind answering the questions. I'm standing as a candidate at an election. I'm asking people to support me. They want to know what sort of person I am. I've always assumed I would be married. I actually don't think of myself as middle-aged and maybe I am, maybe I'm not."

If Sue Lawley and her researchers had gone more thoroughly into Brown's very private life, they would have uncovered a fascinating world of relationships down the years. As they say north of the border, he is one for the lassies. What does he look for?

Girls who are "attractive, humorous, exciting", he once confessed. At Edinburgh University, "there were girlfriends, always steady ones", said his friend and flatmate Jon Wills. "Gordon is a charmer and sometimes a flirt, but he is not promiscuous. When his parents visited Edinburgh, frantic efforts were made to remove all traces of female occupation. This went on long after he had been elected to Parliament. It's not that Gordon was ashamed — he just didn't want to upset his mother."

Sometimes these efforts were more frantic than thorough. Will Stevenson, a close friend from student days, remembers when Mrs Brown came to stay at Marchmont Road and insisted on doing the copious amount of washing. "She found a pair of girl's panties in the wash," he says. "They were the resident girlfriend's at the time. They both chose to ignore them. Then she laid them on top of the pile. Gordon said: 'I don't know how they got there. They came from the laundry.' It was ridiculous. Both knew the other knew."

Gordon Brown's first great love, Princess Margarita of Romania, arrived on the scene in 1968. She came to Edinburgh to study for a degree in sociology and politics. Princess Margarita is the eldest daughter of the exiled King Michael and the great-great-granddaughter of Queen Victoria, fifty-third in line to the British throne. When she was born in 1950 the Romanian royal family lived a wandering life. Her home as a child was Ayot St Lawrence, Hertfordshire, where her father supported himself in the 1950s with a market garden and chicken farm. There were homes later in Lausanne, Florence, Denmark and Edinburgh. They had no crown jewels and little money.

"It was a very solid and romantic story," Margarita later told *Harpers & Queen*. "I never stopped loving him, but one day it didn't seem right any more. It was politics, politics, politics, and I needed nurturing." Friends say she ended the affair and took up with Jim Keddie, a firefighter and Labour activist from the working-class district of Leith. "I think Gordon was very bitter about it," says a fellow activist from the period. "But Jim was good company, attentive and funny — and didn't give up his weekends to politics."



The picture taken by the *News of the World* of Gordon Brown and Sarah Macaulay in a Soho restaurant — a semi-formal acknowledgement of their relationship

"We didn't have a privileged upbringing," she said later. "There were a lot of financial problems." A friend of that period said: "She was sweet, gentle and cut out to make somebody a very good wife. She was bright, too, though not like him, but they seemed made for each other. She took a great deal more care of him than he did of himself, and he loved her attention."

The relationship, about which Brown has never talked (in common with every other relationship), lasted for five years. "Everybody assumed they would get married," said Wills. "It was a very solid and romantic story," Margarita later told *Harpers & Queen*. "I never stopped loving him, but

hit it off extremely well. Marion, three years younger than Brown, was bright, intuitive and sharp. "Politically sharp," says Colin Currie. "Sharper than Gordon gave her credit for, maybe." Friends saw a likeness to Margarita. "It got close to marriage," said a friend of both. "She had a huge regard for Gordon. It came to a slow, painful end over some years. That was a matter of distress to people who liked both of them."

In the wake of this second failure, Sheena MacDonald re-emerged. "She was a theme revisited," said an unkind friend. "But by the early 1990s, she was a successful. I pressed one of his closest aides. Does he love Sarah? After some humming and hawing, back came a firm "Yes". But the flurry of stories at the beginning of 1997 that Brown and Sarah were to

marry were premature. His close friend Will Stevenson, director of the British Film Institute, says: "He has yet to settle down and have a family. These things will happen, I am quite confident. The future Mrs Brown may have a view about that, which he might share," he hinted.

Before Brown's first budget he allowed the *News of the World* to take his photograph with Sarah in a Soho restaurant. Vasso and Piero's Pavilion. The couple had agreed to have their photograph taken after a tip-off to the *News of the World* and even consented to a second take when the photographer thought he had not got a good enough shot. It was, therefore, an "official" picture, a semi-formal acknowledgement of their relationship. A friend of Sarah said Brown wanted "to formalise" the relationship so that she could visit him in the flat he occupies in 10 Downing Street "without ducking and diving out of the back door". Like Brown, Sarah is a

political animal, but it is not known how much he talks politics to her. The Chancellor has a tightly knit group of friends. However, even they are not as close as his brothers, Andrew and John, his closeness to whom is matched by his devotion to his parents, John and Elizabeth, who live in retirement in a modest bungalow built by the family construction firm on the outskirts of Insh, Aberdeenshire.

Even at the height of the general election campaign in 1997, Gordon broke off from the hectic battle to visit his parents on their golden wedding celebration on April 27. His mother says: "He is a good son to us. Very kind." The couple have watched their son's rise with admiration, and not a little bewilderment. "He was the shyest member of the family when he was young," says his mother. "The other boys were extroverts, but Gordon was the opposite. I'm amazed he does this."

• This is an edited extract from Gordon Brown: the Biography, by Paul Routledge, published by Simon & Schuster tomorrow, £17.99 © Paul Routledge 1998



Princess Margarita arrived on the scene in 1968



Friends say that Brown had a flutter with Sheena MacDonald

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The vice of fashion can be utterly destructive. When it is concerned with sartorial styling or metropolitan tastes in new artists or the latest food fad it is no more than one of the games we play to keep ourselves interested in the banal or, more kindly, the superficial everyday gossip which gets us by. But when it hardens into dogma it can be a curse.

Political correctness is susceptible to both. Some of the cries against PC are mistaken. I think there can be no doubt that there have been inequities in the past and it is sensible to try to correct them. I fail to see the point of excising the word nigger from Conrad's *Nigger of the Narcissus* or from Faulkner's fiction; but equally I fail to see why we should not abandon use of that word given that it is now absolutely clear that it offends those it purports to describe. I am aware that there is a black sub-group which now adopts nigger as a matter of pride, but on the whole the word is out, and we are the better for it. Racism

Slavery is no simple black and white issue

has been identified and systems put in place to extinguish it. Yet in this most sensitive area, political correctness may be as much a negative as a positive force. In America there is a massive body of opinion calling for compensation for the descendants of slaves. I think the sum being asked for is roughly £60,000 per descendant. The idea behind it is brutally, that the whites brought the blacks to America against their will and gave them status only as possessions — a crime for which they should now pay.

This is not a proposition to be dismissed without consideration. It is surely civilised to make good what we have left undone. This could shift society out of the Hegelian clashes which have changed down the centuries. More research would have to be done, though, into the psychology of the

mass apology — ie, would one half of a nation apologising to the other half effect a personal redemption or institute an administrative nightmare? For who would count as black in multicoloured America? If £60,000 were involved it is not difficult to see even the remnants of the Ku Klux Klan coming up with a trace of African blood. But the prospect of administrative chaos must not be allowed to negate justice.

Yet there is one vital aspect to all this which receives very little airing because the fashion which says that blacks have been wholly exploited is so powerful. In his new book *The Slave Trade*, the historian Hugh Thomas points out, as has been pointed out before, that the begetters of the trade were not white Europeans, but black Africans. For hundreds of years before the Atlantic slave trade could



possibly have been thought of, there was slavery in Africa. Muslim slave traders also carried out the practice before, during and after the white West Europeans piled the Atlantic with their iniquitous cargoes. It does not make it any better for the whites that the blacks also did it, and that the blacks captured and delivered the slaves to the whites in the first place. But it does give it a perspective and a context which runs against the fashion of contemporary dogma.

It is also important to give the past its due. Locke, the philosopher of new worlds; Guy, the founder of a great hospital; all invested in the slave trade. Even the great Abraham Lincoln declared that he took on the slave issue to win the war between the states, and said that if he could have won it without taking on the issue of the freeing of slaves he would have done so. Yet no man in his time and for much time since has been thought more decent.

Today we have the right to

rectify, although sometimes we rush to clean up so madly that, as with some Old Masters, the cleaning ruins the matter. It is indicative of fashion — in this case, the fashion being the simple-minded idea that whites and whites alone were the inventors and perpetrators of the Atlantic slave trade — that the facts as presented by Thomas and other historians will make little or no impact.

Some of the reviewers, for instance, have been at great pains to point out that Atlantic slavery was different from African slavery. The latter, they say, was more like Greek or Roman slavery, where slaves could become valued members of the community and set free. While there is some truth in this, it can also scarcely be denied that over the centuries of African trade

many captives who became slaves were used and abused in ways so similar to those in the Atlantic trade, as to make everything else mere hair-splitting. One huge difference, of course, was the Middle Passage — so well described in Barry Unsworth's novel — and the horror of that journey has emphasised the horror of what, on land or sea, was always a shocking business.

The case for the recognition that people of all colours behaved badly is that it has the virtue not only of telling it like it was, but the added advantage of showing life itself as it is. It is no good pretending that whites are always dominating and bad and blacks always victimised and good. We know that if the boot is on the other foot then blacks can be dominating and whites victimised. That, surely, is human nature, even though it is human nature at its worst. To build a whole philosophy on the dogma of innate inequality is historically incorrect and just storing up more trouble.

Young stars show early season form

ALREADY enjoying a busy week as featured composer in the Park Lane Group Young Artists concerts, Diana Burrell was at the Barbican on Thursday for the premiere of her new Flute Concerto. Once again the performers were young — the outstanding London Schools Symphony Orchestra — and it must be gratifying for the composer to hear a new generation of musicians already playing her work.

Entering her 50th year, Burrell has reached a turning point in her career. Moving away from nature-inspired programme music, her output is becoming more abstract, and the new concerto is an immediately appealing but never obvious score that stands up well on its own.

Lasting a little over 15 minutes, it is structured in a single movement, like its predecessors for clarinet and viola. A lot of ideas are packed into the demanding piece, and Burrell made no technical concessions in writing for the LSSO.

The solo part is richly coloured, and requires its player to switch between alto flute, piccolo and the ordinary instruments. Here the distinguished flautist William Bennett, himself a founding LSSO member, used his rich tonal palette to heighten these contrasts and, beginning with the alto flute, he projected

CONCERT

LSSO / Diana Burrell
Barbican

through the large, percussion-heavy orchestra with ease.

John Lubbock, an experienced conductor of Burrell's music, kept everything in balance as the textures changed: fluttering strings and woodwind give way to a solo cadenza over timpani, pastoral sounds and stabbing chords, dancing piccolo passages and, finally, a quiet ending.

The rest of the programme in this first concert of the LSSO's 1998 season featured Slavonic music. Borodin's overture to *Prince Igor* — actually Glazunov's overture written "nearly according to Borodin's plan" — had verve and bite. Almost every section of the band acquitted itself well, above all the strings, which shone as they seldom do in youth orchestras. They were rewarded with Josef Suk's haunting *Meditation on an Old Czech Hymn* for string orchestra, and played it with poise.

Dvořák's Eighth, the most Bohemian sounding of his symphonies, received a highly spirited interpretation under the attentive Lubbock. Playing with warmth from the start, the orchestra reached its best form in the graceful scherzo and trio.

The finale, with its characteristic cellos in the opening bars and full-bodied sound at the climax, made one forget that this is not a professional orchestra, and indeed the LSSO can have given few better performances.

JOHN ALLISON

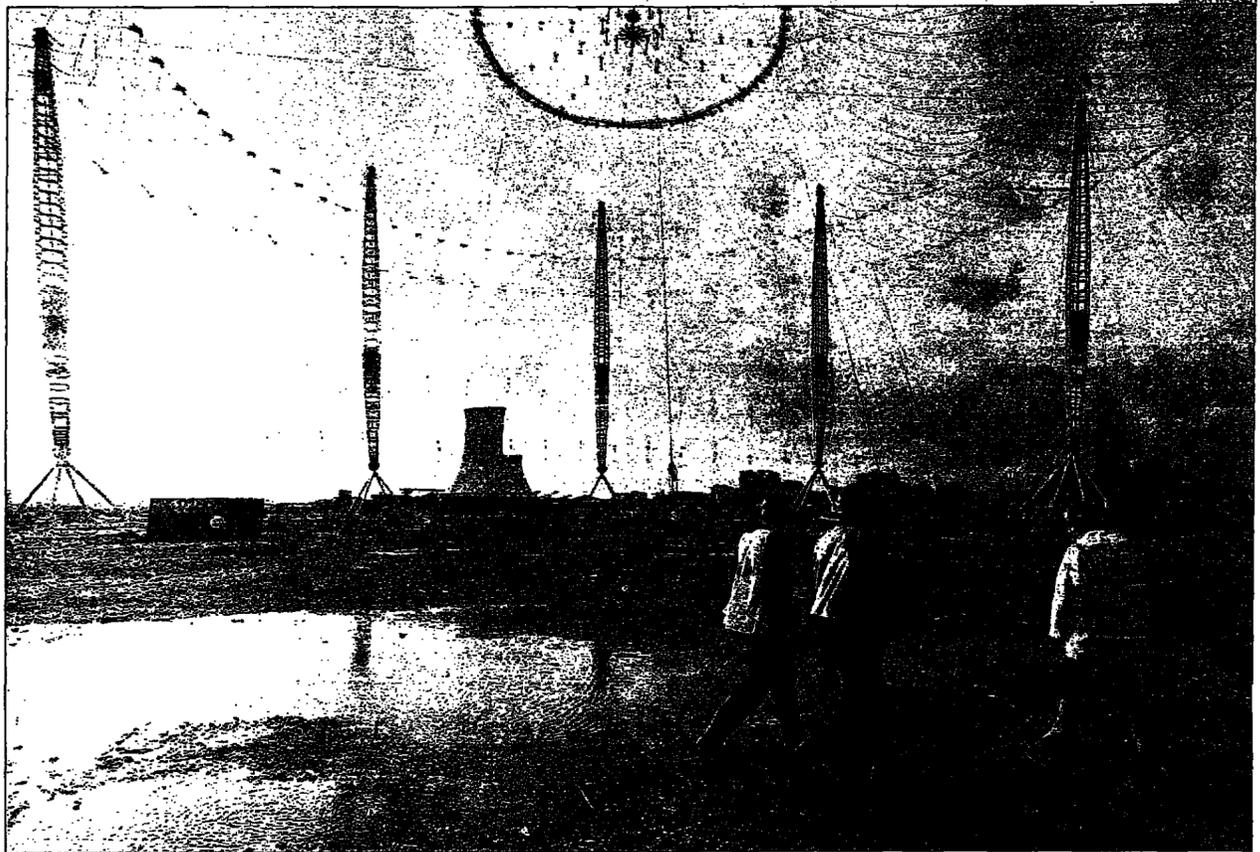
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ARCHITECTURE: The Millennium Dome faces fierce regional competition, says Marcus Binney



Ring of confidence: the dome now taking shape at Greenwich is an impressive structure, but can it rival, for example, the thrills and spills of Rotherham's vast Magna?

Controversial it may be, but the Millennium Dome is speeding ahead, on time and on budget. The ring of soaring steel masts is already a spectacular landmark across the Thames, held by an incredible web of 70 kilometres of steel wire which will both support the roof and prevent it blowing away.

The dome is a tent rather than a building, a lightweight construction that takes us straight into the age of gigantic science fiction bubbles. "The whole structure, both supports and covering, weighs less than the water in the average municipal swimming pool," says Mike Davies, the partner of Richard Rogers and the man masterminding the project.

With 12 masts, 24 opening panels in the roof and a diameter of 365 metres, it also makes a neat play on Time. The brightly coloured yellow masts look spectacular against a bright blue sky, lighting up one by one as the sun emerges from a cloud.

The big gripe is that £758 million is a hideous sum to spend on what looks like a temporary building. Ian Liddell of Buro Happold, the structural engineers, challenges this. "PTFE [the Teflon-coated glassfibre material used for the dome covering] can stay bright and clean for ever. It hasn't been in existence very long, but Laverne College in California, built in 1971, has a PTFE roof that looks as good today as when it was built."

The simple action of the rain should keep the canopy clean but if dirt accumulates on one side, Davies says you can simply walk out on it with a hose and brush. When the Millennium Exhibition comes to an end in December 2001, the dome is big enough to house a huge indoor sports arena or become London's counterpart of Birmingham's NEC. And of the notorious £758 million budget (including a £400 million lottery grant) the dome itself accounts for just £40 million, which for one million square feet of floor space works out at a bargain £40 a square foot.

Moreover, we lament the loss of great exhibition buildings such as the Crystal Palace

Nothing new under the dome?

and the huge gallery of machines at the 1889 Paris Exhibition, as well as the classical palaces of the 1893 Chicago World Exhibition. Those that survive, the Eiffel Tower and the Grand Palais in Paris as well as the Twenties and Thirties exhibition buildings in Seville and Barcelona, are now seigneurial landmarks.

In Greenwich the roof-laying will be finished in June, with the aim of handing over the completed structure to the exhibition organisers this autumn, giving them a full 15 months to kit it out.

Peter Mandelson is due to tell the Parliamentary Select Committee more about the contents on February 17. But the themes he has so far revealed — Mind Body and Soul, Work Rest and Play, Neighbourhood, Our Country and Our Planet — look disturbingly like several of the 14 or so landmark projects the Millennium Commission is

already supporting around Britain with hundreds of millions of lottery pounds.

For example, the Glasgow Science Centre (lottery grant £35 million) focuses on human creativity. The Newcastle Centre for Life (£27 million) offers a theatre of the brain and elaborate 3-D displays of DNA and molecular biology, and an institute of bio-ethics which will invite the public to debate issues such as the cloning of human beings.

Newcastle is putting all of its 146 university researchers into the new centre designed by Terry Farrell, and the project is led by a top professor of genetics and a popular science writer.

By contrast the Millennium Dome exhibits appear heavily designer-led, with the brief

being written by the commission rather than by experts in each field. How easy will it be for Greenwich to compete with, say, Bristol's Science World (£13 million lottery grant) whose director is Martin Freeth, the brains behind such BBC successes as *The Mind Machine*, *Tomorrow's World* and *Burke's Special*?

When it comes to the theme of work, can Greenwich rival the thrills and spills of Rotherham's Magna (£18.6 million lottery grant), a vast reborn steel works giving visitors a chance to operate robots and take a ride in a steel ladle, watching blowing molten metal, water walls and a furnace explosion? Magna promises to have the future of manufacturing on show too, from razor

blades to ocean liners, microtechnology to suspension bridges.

The Earth Centre near Doncaster (£50 million lottery grant) promises to show us what life will be like in the mid-21st century with a global showcase of future technology, while Millennium Point in Birmingham (£50 million) offers future innovations and a University of the First Age.

The future of the Earth is already covered outside London every which way. In Edinburgh at Dynamic Earth (architect Sir Michael Hopkins, lottery grant £15 million) we have the creation of the planet complete with earthquakes, volcanoes and meteor impacts. Liverpool's Discovery Park (£27 million) goes one better with the Birth of the Universe and a Space Time Machine.

Below the sea? The Deep in Hull (lottery grant £18.5 million) offers an underwater

research station where belief will be suspended as visitors descend 20,000 leagues under the sea to look out through giant windows into coral reefs teeming with fish, with controlled leaks of water suggesting unbearable pressures in the ocean depths. Experts will show how life began underwater and how the sea can be used in a sustainable manner.

Space, Mr Mandelson? The National Space Science Centre is being built in Leicester (architect Nicholas Grimshaw, lottery grant £23 million) with its very own Millennium Dome planetarium, as well as the backing of Britain's foremost university space department and a chairman who worked on putting a man on the moon.

The biggest question is what Mandelson will do beneath the centre of the dome, where until recently Sir Cameron Mackintosh was planning a 12,000-seat theatre spectacular. The hot money is on a political rally launching a new universal Bill of Rights that will turn the world spotlight on new Labour. But even here Mandelson already has rivals, led by Birmingham's Young People's Parliament, which will give 11 to 14-year-olds the opportunity to hold weekly video-conference debates with MPs in Westminster. You can't say Labour doesn't believe in competition.

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Can Blair's plan at last bring peace?

Paul Bew discerns a new light at the end of Ulster's tunnel

The denouement of the Northern Irish peace process is at hand. The recent revelation of the surprisingly Unionist so-called "Blair plan" for the Province has provoked a sharp reaction from the Irish Government, the SDLP and, above all, Sinn Féin. Despite Dublin's apparent rejection of the Prime Minister's proposal, Mr David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, remains a net beneficiary.

Mr Trimble now has an answer for his many critics within Unionism (including four members of his own parliamentary party). He can tell them that his painful decision to stay within the talks process after the controversial admission of Sinn Féin in September — without, remember, even the realistic prospect of the decommissioning of a single IRA bullet — has been justified. The talks have not been the much-vaunted "political killing fields" for Unionists.

By staying in, David Trimble has been able to intensify his dialogue with Mr Blair. In a recent interview, Trimble made it clear that he was comfortable with the language used by the Prime Minister in his May speech in Belfast — the key Blairite themes were the need for devolution in Northern Ireland and elsewhere in the UK and "sensible cross-border institutions". It is, however, even more valuable that he can say that he is comfortable with Mr Blair's current, more developed, thinking about an Ulster settlement.

It is now clear that the British Government supports a "Council of the Isles" body; this would link, on an East-West basis, the new assemblies in Scotland and Wales with Northern Ireland. When the Anglo-Irish framework document was published in 1995, easily the most substantive Unionist criticisms focused on the weakness of the East-West section. This new proposed institutional East-West linkage is of enormous symbolic significance to Unionists, who find it difficult to embrace a settlement based solely on a new North-South linkage on the island of Ireland. For Mr Trimble, there is the added advantage that the Council of the Isles idea is a traditional Ulster Unionist concept pioneered in the Molyneux era, and some of those close to the leadership of Sir James Molyneux have been among Mr Trimble's sharpest critics in recent months.

Although the Dublin Government has reservations about the Council of the Isles formula, Bertie Ahern, the Taoiseach, has clearly not ruled it out at this stage. To go with the Council of the Isles concept and, indeed, to accept formally a new Northern Irish assembly, even one of an implicitly power-sharing sort, the Irish Government and the SDLP need to have a fuller view of what Mr Trimble means by an enhanced programme of North-South co-operation. Mr Trimble needs to come up with a realistic proposal in this area.

Where does Sinn Féin fit into all this? Rather worryingly, at the moment Sinn Féin does not appear to be fitting in at all. Mr Blair

will shortly try to mollify the republicans by announcing an apology for, and an independent inquiry into, the killing of 14 civil rights marchers in Londonderry's Bloody Sunday tragedy of January 1972, but there are worrying signs of instability within republicanism — signs which go far beyond the well-documented evidence of republican dissidence and resignations.

Since the start of the talks, Sinn Féin has continued to argue for an end to British jurisdiction in Ireland; even though it is the Irish Government (not the British) which has publicly promised to drop its claim to jurisdiction in the event of an agreed settlement. That will inevitably leave Northern Ireland within the UK. Irish willingness on this score was again reiterated during Mr Trimble's important November meeting with Mr Ahern in London.

Sinn Féin remains opposed to the establishment of an Northern Irish assembly, even though that assembly was part of the framework document proposals which Gerry Adams claims, in other moods, to be his "bottom line". Mr Adams has also raised expectations of a mass release of prisoners by May — a rather unlikely development. Above all, Martin McGuinness has continued to insist that there could be a "fluidity" in the British position which would favour republicans.

The significance of the "Blair plan", even if it is never formally tabled in the talks, and represented only one approach that the Prime Minister was following sympathetically, is that it has knocked firmly on the head Sinn Féin's dreams of "rolling over" Mr Blair.

This will make some people very nervous, but there is never any prospect of finessing the moment which is now approaching — for 25 years the IRA tried to coerce Ulster Unionists into a united Ireland. Will the IRA now tolerate a settlement based not on coercion but on consent?

This moment, highly dangerous though it is, also gives Mr Trimble his opportunity. More important than the detail of any settlement, important though the detail is, is the settled will of the British State as embodied in the disposition of the man who is likely to be Prime Minister for some considerable time. There are, in Mr Blair's attitude, crucial implications for the working of a North-South body based on agreement and democratic accountability.

The Prime Minister has now given clear evidence of his disposition and Mr Trimble can afford to gamble on the Prime Minister's good faith and take the risk — huge though it is — of rapidly shaping an understanding with those within the SDLP who are clearly in the market for a deal. The road from here leads either to relative stability — underpinned by the referendum choice of potential majorities of both Unionists and nationalists — or to 25 more years of sectarian misery.

The author is Professor of Irish Politics at Queen's University, Belfast.

Some of Winston Churchill's paintings are filled with light, others with depression and self-doubt

Portrait of the artist with his black dog

Last Thursday evening I went to the private view of *Painting is a Pastime*, the exhibition of Winston Churchill's paintings which will be open at Sotheby's in Bond Street until the end of this week. The reception included many people who had known Churchill when he was in power, and it was a nice touch that Sotheby's served Pol Roger, his favourite champagne.

I have never seen an exhibition of Churchill's paintings before, though I have quite often seen them individually on the walls of his friends or colleagues. He is best known for his impressionist scenes of landscape, many of them done on holiday in the South of France. The characteristics of these landscapes did not change greatly from the early 1920s to the mid-1950s. They show the stylistic influence of Sir John Lavery, who taught him painting. Lavery describes them well: "Mr Churchill has been called a pupil of mine, which is highly flattering, for I know few amateur wielders of the brush with a keener sense of light and colour, or a surer grasp of essentials."

These paintings are cheerful, colourful and strongly lit, with the sun often falling on a blue Mediterranean. At their best, they are strongly composed. In 1952, when he was nearly 80, he could still produce as delightful a painting as his *Cap d'Ail* of that year. These holiday paintings are favourites of the public and now command a very high price. Even 20 years ago his painting *The Pope's Palace at Avignon* sold for £26,000, a record at the time; last year his 1927 painting of *Mimizan* reached £150,000 at Christie's. These are works he enjoyed painting and they are thoroughly enjoyable to see. They represent the open and cheerful side of his character.

The Sotheby's exhibition also contains a small group of portraits. I have never seen any of these before

and they came as a surprise. The landscapes and still lives have a very positive emotional quality. Almost without exception, the portraits are seen from a more melancholy or even tragic point of view. In this exhibition the only major postwar portrait is of Lady Churchill, painted in 1955 from what must have been a newspaper photograph of her launching the *Indomitable* in 1940.

"Indomitable" is very much a Churchillian word, as 1940 was Churchill's greatest year. This is therefore a tribute to Lady Churchill's spirit and to the support she gave him in Britain's time of trial. Yet it is not altogether a flattering portrait. Lady Churchill does indeed look indomitable but there is a disturbing tension in her face, and a marked contrast between the expression of the mouth and that of the eyes.

There are rather more prewar portraits, though still only a few. As I was walking around, I was very struck by the portrait of Arthur Balfour, Prime Minister when Churchill was first in Parliament; the portrait was painted in 1928-29 near the end of Balfour's life. It is placed near an earlier portrait, *Lord Balfour with his Niece*, which Churchill had painted in the mid-1920s. Clearly the image is the same in both portraits, which may both derive from a holiday snapshot, but between the two portraits Balfour's expression has been softened and, in a strange way, deepened. In the first portrait

Balfour looks like nothing more than a shrewd old clubman with a gaze of friendly but rather cautious appraisal. His niece looks subtly dissatisfied and somewhat arrogant.

The later portrait is much more interesting. It is painted in *grisaille* and Balfour looks like an elder statesman whose vast experience of the world has made him peer into the pit. I was reminded of the contrast between wisdom and horror that one sees in Francis Bacon's series of Popes. Balfour does not look quite as

colour, vitality and enjoyment. When he paints people, they express the tragedy of human life. In his own life, he had to suffer the "black dog" of depression. In his landscapes and still lives there is no sign of depression. But in his portraits of his friends, it is the black dog that we see.

The other of the early major portraits is a self-portrait which shows the artist holding a palette. This was painted in 1919 or 1920, when he was back in Lloyd George's Government. At first sight he is hardly recognisable as Churchill, so different is the image from the traditional one. In this Sotheby's exhibition one can compare it with Orpen's magnificent state portrait of 1916. It is the same man, with the same brief nose, the same receding reddish hair. Yet it is not the same personality. Orpen paints the public Churchill, the man of command and confidence; Churchill paints himself as the private person, the man of self-doubt and depression. The self-portrait is a wonderful work because of this insight. It is the most interesting painting in the exhibition. No so much in terms of skill but in terms of deep introspection, it is Churchill's masterpiece as a painter, perhaps his only true masterpiece, and it is tragic. On the shoulders of the painter rests the burden of all his past failures, including the catastrophe of the Dardanelles.

In the lives of the great mystics, one reads of the "dark night of the soul"

William Rees-Mogg

if he is going to scream, but he does look as if he is haunted by unbearable memories.

There are two important earlier portraits, both dating from a period shortly after the first world war. Lady Gwendoline Churchill is a study in that mild but chronic depression which some women suffer in middle life. Her face is shown in repose but not at peace. One half sympathises with her and half regrets her mood of frustration.

When Churchill paints oranges and lemons, that he last did in his 84th year in 1948, they are full of

Britain remains a nation apart

Issues such as the EU, not scandal, are what really matter, says Peter Riddell

Britain has had 21 Foreign Secretaries since 1945, of whom at least four besides Robin Cook probably had been adulterers and another three were renowned "gropers". In no case, however, have these private peccadilloes affected their public performances, or reputations overseas.

Nor is there any evidence that the press's prurient interest in the sex lives of politicians affects attitudes towards government, or changes votes. The public may enjoy reading such stories but it is generally understanding about infidelity. By contrast, voters dislike financial impropriety, punishing the sins of the wallet rather than of the bed. The media is less discriminating in bracketing both together under the catch-all term "sleaze".

The Tories suffered in the last Parliament because of their mishandling of such charges and because of broader divisions. Anyway, their Government was probably doomed to defeat by this stage, as John Major candidly admitted in a fascinating weekend interview on *Robin Day's Book Talk* programme (which deserves a far wider audience than BBC News 24). MPs caught up in "cash for questions" allegations performed far worse in last May's election than those who hit the headlines over adultery. Paddy Ashdown has not suffered from his admissions six years ago over a past affair.

Tony Blair was therefore politically shrewd, as well as right, in his *Breakfast with Frost* interview to express total confidence in Mr Cook. The fuss is likely to blow over quickly. After all, no questions of press intrusion are raised, since the stories arise from comments made freely by



his estranged wife Margaret. Nor has anything been said which affects the Foreign Secretary's official duties.

Mr Blair, and Jack Straw over Christmas, have handled such private matters with a deft touch. The Government has also benefited from greater self-restraint from most Tory MPs than some other Labour politicians showed in Opposition.

Mr Blair is probably correct that the public is "too young" to say that these things happen in Government. (The reopening of the wounds of the 1994 leadership contest in Paul Routledge's biography of Gordon Brown matters more, by underlining the lingering tensions in the Brown camp, particularly in its prickly relations with Peter Mandelson.) In a perverse way, the latest stories about Mr Cook and Mr Brown strengthen

stage in the life of the Government, before policy changes begin to show through. Some of the illusions of the euphoria stage have not completely disappeared, however.

A legitimate criticism of Mr Blair and Mr Cook is that they have presented too rosy a picture of Britain's post-election relations with the European Union in all the razzmatazz about the launch of the British presidency. The mutual self-congratulation with Jacques Santer during the visit of the Brussels Commission to London last Thursday disguised some awkward choices. Relations with the EU are better than before the election. Unlike Mr Major, Mr Blair can negotiate in the EU without always being inhibited by a divided Cabinet and parliamentary party back home. Britain

is able to participate before the next election". He does not use such conditional language in *The Sun*. Moreover, the summer will have to decide this summer whether to spend large sums on preparing the public sector, including the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise, for the euro. Such action may be necessary to convince business to take similar steps.

Forget Mr Cook's private life. I doubt if it will rate a footnote in any history of the Government by comparison with these decisions on the euro and, as Mr Blair yesterday acknowledged, the public's judgment on whether waiting lists have been reduced, hospitals and schools improved, and on the economy. Scandal may titillate, but these issues decide the fate of governments.

Phone blight

THE REMORSELESS exploitation of the countryside for commercial ends is about to overwhelm a symbol of England's bucolic charms: a telephone company has just received permission to plant a transmission mast on Bredon Hill, a beauty spot immortalised by A.E. Housman in *A Shropshire Lad*. Despite objections from countryside groups, Wychavon District Council has granted Mercury Personal Communications planning permission to erect the 75ft eyecore later this year. Housman, a classicist and poet, published his most famous work in 1896 as a series of 63 verses set in a half-imaginary Shropshire and usually addressed to or spoken by a farm-boy or soldier.

The poem was originally greeted with little enthusiasm but became hugely popular in the First World War, its nostalgic tone harking back to a past rural idyll. One verse reads: "In summertime on Bredon, The bells they sound so clear: Round both the shires they ring them, In sleeples far and near. A happy noise to hear." Housman was not the only sensitive type to be captivated by the spot: it also inspired Ralph Vaughan Williams to compose a musical evocation of the vale.

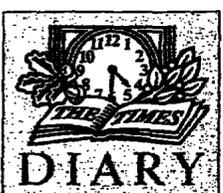
There are already 8,000 of the masts and another 4,000 planned. A big tree at the Council for the Protection of Rural England complained that Bredon Hill was



Housman; Vaughan Williams

"another example of a trend that is scarring hillsides across the country". But Mercury argues that more masts are needed to plug gaps in its transmission, while a clerical sort at Wychavon Council came up with a thoroughly feeble excuse: "Because the mast will be built near electricity pylons, the visual impact will be reduced."

Richard Noble, the leader of the British team which broke the



world land speed record in September, failed to match that performance on the M25 recently. His VW Golf had to be rescued by traffic police after they spotted it sidetracked on the hard shoulder after running out of fuel.

Lost cause
ALONE in the world, Austin Mitchell, Grimsby's affable MP, believes that Labour's efforts in the election were "disastrous". "Our campaign was nervous to the point of perpetual jitters," he opines in today's *The House Magazine*, referring to one of the greatest victories in British electoral history. "This was the bland leading the blind as vacuity was echoed round the country like a Greek karaoke chorus of clones all busily saying

"Tories bad, Labour good." And the outcome of such a ruinous policy? "We end up with an unmanageable majority." Fortunately, one member of the Mitchell household has greater political nous: Linda McDougall, the MP's wife and a journalist who has used her damaging revelations about Robin Cook's marriage so effectively to promote *Westminster Women*, her television programme and book.

ACT THREE, scene two. With the Royal House in ruins after the devastating attack by Gerald, chief of the Barbarians, King Peter has been forced to fall on his sword, leaving the fair Queen Mary and Count Nicholas, the trusty nobleman, to continue the fight alone. But, as the treasure chest runs dry, the Queen and Count begin to argue and plot separately how to flee the rubble unscathed. If only preconditions on stage at the Royal Opera House were so exciting.

Loud lady
EVEN if Geoffrey Robinson's wife, Marie Elena, stole the show dressed in her extravagant gold trouser suit and black bustier, I thoroughly enjoyed the first big social event of the Blair regime. The



Guests: the Robinsons

festivities after Ed Balls, Gordon Brown's boy wonder, and Yvette Cooper, a new Labourite, married in Eastbourne at the weekend were jolly good fun. Among the heaps of gifts, I spotted a football from Norwich City, signed by its players, in recognition of Ball's fanatical support. I danced the night away to the sounds of the Glenn Miller-style band, Chris Smith and his Pearls.

Cry foul
BARBARA Follett, the Labour MP, has dashed home from a swell American holiday with Ken, her husband, the multi-millionaire author. The cause of such activity: to offer the benefit of her extensive knowledge of football to help resolve a dispute between her newly adopted home team, Stevenage Borough, and Newcastle United. An emergency focus group revealed that the Stevenage MP would impress target voters by entering the fray. She soon demanded that "Newcastle United should stop arguing with the ref and start playing by the rules."

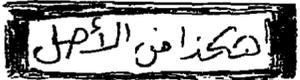
Night bird
AFTER living the life of Riley, Imran Khan now gives the impression that he has grown out of the pleasures of the jet set and become a serious-minded chap. But becom-



Imran Khan's sketch of a tiger

ing a husband, father and politician does not appear to have wholly cured his appetite for nightspots: he has started muckraking in *London Clubs International*, *The Magazine*, distributed around London's gaming clubs such as The Ritz Casino and Les Ambassadeurs. Its latest edition bears this delightful little sketch of a tiger by the former cricketing champ. Bids in an auction for his cancer appeal — should be directed to Marilyn Eden, c/o London Clubs International.

JASPER GERARD





WISDOM FROM THE EAST

Blair can ride out his troubles by sticking to his strategy

The last time a Prime Minister travelled to the land of the rising sun the diplomatic offensive was overshadowed by fighting on the home front. The mission John Major led in Japan in 1993 became little more than an exotic backdrop for his expressions of increasing irritation with party intrigue and the failings of colleagues. Tony Blair's own oriental odyssey five years later started in eerily similar fashion with his Foreign Secretary's private life under uncomfortable scrutiny and Westminster abuzz at new revelations of the tension between Mr Blair's close advisers and his closest colleague, the Chancellor, Gordon Brown.

There is, however, one striking difference between the two episodes which explains Mr Blair's sanguine manner in interviews yesterday. The troubles in Mr Major's party dominated headlines because he scarcely had a course to be knocked off, and in the absence of an organising vision the intrigue of others dominated events. Mr Blair can wrest back the initiative because he has, at the moment, a strategy on which he is determined. In Northern Ireland, and on welfare, he appears to know his own mind and is energetic in giving his ideas life. The problem rests not in any lack of political will, but in the entrenched interests which have frustrated reformers in the past and which continue to lie in wait for the hopeful.

It is useful to which the Prime Minister has given his greatest attention in the breathing-spaces allowed by his itinerary. He has been in regular contact with the Northern Ireland Secretary, one link in a delicate diplomatic chain embracing Dublin, London and Ulster's parties, in an effort to hammer out a position paper which will provide a basis for agreement in the talks which resume today. Last Thursday *The Times* encouraged the Prime Minister to publish the paper on which he had been working in order to "explain how the Union might be modernised to accommodate legitimate nationalist concerns". Last Fri-

day, in our pages, John Lloyd outlined the basis of the Prime Minister's thinking. Mr Blair had expressed himself keen to devolve power to a new Ulster body which would form links with Dublin on a basis of mutual advantage and sit within a new network of relationships between all the legislatures and assemblies of these islands. Since last week the Irish Government and others within nationalist ranks have voiced their concerns but the basis on which Mr Blair wishes to proceed is not radically out of line with provisional agreements reached before Christmas with the more moderate of Irish nationalist's leaders.

The Irish Government and others will continue to press for a more radically nationalist tone and content, not least to satisfy republican demands. There is room for an accommodation with sensibly-framed pragmatic demands, but Mr Blair should hold as firm as possible to his initial instincts throughout negotiations. The proposals he has favoured are the closest discernible to a democratically acceptable cross-community consensus. Republicans, if they are at all sincere about abiding by the principle of consent and respecting democracy, must learn to live with an assembly in Ulster and Ulster in the United Kingdom. If they choose to reject a reformed assembly in a modernised state then they must realise the consequences of their defiance of democracy.

Reforming the welfare state is as potentially intractable as devising an acceptable form of government for Ulster but a similar faith in the power of clear principles forcefully prosecuted characterises Mr Blair's approach. The growing emphasis that the State must withdraw from the provision of universal benefits may further infuriate the Left but it is the most realistic path to follow. Sticking to that course will require courage, but Mr Blair must realise that diverting from it will take him into the morass from which his predecessor was only delivered by defeat.

POWER FAILURE AT THE UN

Some sensible thoughts, for a change, on fixing the fuses

A year into the job, Kofi Annan has established himself as a well-liked United Nations Secretary-General. That is not unimportant. Had it not been for his personal popularity, the clutch of Third World diehards who dominate voting in the General Assembly would have blocked passage of the administrative reforms, modest though these were, that he put forward last summer. To get them through was vital to the UN's prospects of ever persuading the US Congress to settle America's debts to the organisation.

But for Mr Annan, this is only a small first hurdle; for if the reluctant embrace of better housekeeping failed to make international headlines, that is because these reforms barely impinge on the state of the UN's finances and credibility. That is most disturbingly evident in international security, where Lord Carrington, writing to *The Times* last week, has accurately identified a "power failure".

Saddam Hussein's continued defiance of the Security Council is only the most dangerous example of the crippling decline in the UN's authority since 1990. That is directly related to a series of grave misjudgments, and a relapse into mere rhetoric. When the Council invoked the enforcement section of the UN Charter over the invasion of Kuwait, there was no doubting its seriousness. But since then it has been cited more than 100 times, too often in circumstances where governments have been conspicuously unwilling or unable to follow through with decisive action. As the report just issued by an international task force on *Strengthening the UN's Enforcement Capabilities*, chaired by Lord Carrington, notes, "ambiguity and uncertainty — two things militaries and publics abhor — have become an uncomfortable way of life for the Security Council". The interminable debate about enlarging the council is irrelevant

unless it can improve its capacity to enforce its decisions.

Task forces on the UN notoriously lose themselves in the clouds. This is an exception. In tackling the "power failure", it takes the electrician's approach; its recommendations sensibly steer clear of anything that would require General Assembly endorsement, let alone changes to the UN Charter. It concentrates on repairing the faults in the UN's enforcement machinery, whether for economic sanctions or military action.

To bridge the gap between words and action, the report says, the council should employ "more of the worst-case reasoning typically used in military planning". But if, the report continues, the UN is to make realistic decisions and to ensure that where it uses force the rules of engagement are sufficiently robust then council members need the backing of a team of world-class strategic analysts and military advisers.

Sensibly, it proposes revamping the semi-defunct Military Staff Committee as a source of military guidance that, because it could use seconded officers, should cost the UN nothing. Nothing, the report frankly admits, alters the political fact that "the Security Council will always be somewhat clumsy at crisis management". But the UN does not have to fall back on patch and mend to the degree that it does now.

These proposals are worth serious study. After trying to do too much in the early 1990s, the UN is now doing too little. These "boom and bust cycles" are dangerous. The more reliable the machinery can be made, the less likely are delinquent states to challenge the Security Council and the international law it is there to enforce. As the task force admits, "enforcement is not a fashionable subject". To keep the UN option open is an objective that Britain, which rightly values its permanent council seat, should actively support.

BOXED IN

Modern technology will not mean more liberty for ministers

Nations have differing symbols for their important institutions. In the United States, there is Airforce One, the stirring tones of *Hail to the Chief* and the "football" that controls a formidable nuclear arsenal. In France, as in much of continental Europe, the ministerial limousine, oblivious to such irritants as traffic lights, serves instead as the symbol of the State. The British have always taken a rather more reserved approach. If any item can be said to summarise the character of the Crown it is the red boxes in which official documentation is dispatched to our ministers.

This intimate world will change forever tomorrow when Dr David Clark, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, launches the first electronic red box. Paperwork will be out, a state of the art personal computer comes in. This device is operated through fingerprints and voice recognition.

Almost all, but not top secret, papers will be dealt with in this fashion. This exception is the result of intelligence service suspicion that the new briefcase, for all its impressive skills, cannot be certified as "leak-proof". M15 and M16 are entirely right in their caution. The box will, after all, still be in the possession of politicians. There are some

things technology cannot deal with. The new box will, nevertheless, probably be welcomed by ministers. They have long been slaves to endless policy statements and public correspondence. The red box is but a leather-clad hand-cuff to the average elective figure. If inanimate objects could be cited in divorce proceedings, then the red briefcase would have enjoyed extensive legal experience. The bulging red box, it has long been assumed, is simply a form of sophistry that allows civil servants to load down their masters with vast and invariably unnecessary homework. At a stroke, ministers will think they will be liberated.

This, though, said to say is likely to prove false optimism. The red briefcase has its faults but at least there was a physical limit to the amount of paperwork that could be stuffed in it. The new computerised system will have millions of megabytes of ministerial material available and, in all probability, will acquire millions more. Dr Clark will swiftly realise that he has sanctioned a monster — and one that will be impossible to abolish. The Government will come to consider that in this, as many other matters, modernisation is not quite the same as progress.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9KN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Life detention of Hindley seen as constitutional issue

From Professor Emeritus Terence Morris and Sir Louis Blom-Cooper, QC

Sir, Myra Hindley's attempt last month to challenge by means of judicial review the decision of the Home Secretary that she must remain in prison until she dies met with no success (reports, December 19, 20), and an appeal against that decision is now pending before the High Court. The notoriety of her unspeakable crimes has, through excessive media attention, dominated the public consciousness.

Yet the most significant passage of the judgment delivered by the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham of Cornhill, on December 18 consists of the words:

I part from the case uneasily conscious that the issues which may really underlie the case are not before us. There is room for serious debate whether the task of determining how long convicted murderers should serve in prison as punishment for their crimes should be undertaken by the judiciary (as in the case of discretionary life prisoners) or, as now, by the executive.

There is thus a potential conflict between the roles of the judiciary and the executive. There is also the unique nature of the life sentence, which is largely and often profoundly misunderstood by the public at large, not least as a consequence of the use of the unfortunate term "whole-life tariff".

A sentence of life imprisonment must, by definition, comprise a period

of custody. The question is how long should the prisoner stay in prison. If and when the prisoner is released on licence that release is conditional on good behaviour. He or she may be recalled to prison, which is by no means uncommon.

Sir Ernest Gowers, Chairman of the Royal Commission on Capital Punishment from 1949 to 1953, wrote in *A Life for a Life?* (1956):

At present a life sentence is never carried out literally. Convicts have died in prison, but there is no recorded case in which it has been decided that a prisoner shall be kept in prison until he dies.

Everything thus turns on the legislative history and executive actions from the Homicide Act of 1957 onwards.

The question of how long the period of custody should be was raised in the summer of 1961 in an exchange of letters between the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, R. A. Butler, and Mr Edward Gardner, QC, MP. While the point was made by the former that "in an extreme case, it may be necessary to detain a prisoner until he dies", Mr Gardner, though suggesting the possibility of a 25-year minimum, was at no point suggesting a whole-life period.

It is not possible from Mr Butler's economical sentence to deduce whether such a course would arise from the continuing dangerousness of the offender, or from the heinousness of the offence, or a combination of the two. The number of mandatory life-

sentence prisoners has since increased tenfold, to over 3,000; meanwhile the doctrine of the executive-determined tariff has come to be equated with the punitive element in detention — in sharp contrast to the assessment of risk of future violence. The resulting practice has created confusion, uncertainty and much dissatisfaction among both prisoners and the public.

There is nothing in the statutes to suggest that this is what Parliament intended, either in 1957 or in 1965, the year of the Murder (Abolition of the Death Penalty) Act. The whole-life tariff is the construction of successive Home Secretaries since 1988: it is a creature of executive policy, described as "illogical and misleading" by Lord Mustill in a leading case affecting a tariff decision — that of *Doody* (Law Report, June 29, 1993).

It would be most unwise for the present Home Secretary to assume that, because the mass of the public approves of the prospect of Hindley's lifelong detention, the constitutional issue raised by the court in her case is by that means resolved.

Yours faithfully, TERENCE MORRIS (Professor Emeritus of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of London).

LOUIS BLOM-COOPER, 23 Eastgate Street, Winchester SO23 8EB, January 5.

Rubbish en route to the summit

From Mr Jonathan Tinker

Sir, Chris Bonington ("A rubbish tip on the roof of the world", January 3) makes an eloquent plea for the world's highest mountains to be treated with respect by those who venture on their slopes, but he exaggerates when he states that the route up Everest is "waymarked by rubbish heaps".

I have been on five expeditions to Everest, on three different routes and in all three climbing seasons — winter, spring and autumn. I reached the summit in 1993 and have led three commercial guided trips, putting a total of 29 clients, Western guides and sherpa guides on the summit.

My experience is that there is a surprisingly small amount of detritus on any of the routes up Everest. The Governments of China and Nepal are very well aware of the bad publicity that rubbish on Everest brings. The quantity has vastly decreased recently.

In Nepal the environmental rules for Everest expeditions are getting more rigorous each year. All oxygen cylinders and batteries have to be re-exported; tin cans have to be taken down to Kathmandu and even faecal waste has to be deposited in barrels to a landfill site down the valley to avoid contaminating the glacier on which base camp is sited.

Higher up Everest the very few guides such as myself who work in this most hostile of environments make strenuous efforts to keep the mountain clean. The number of oxygen cylinders on the south col has been considerably reduced by leaders offering a cash bonus in return for any brought down to base camp.

Occasionally the evidence of man's passage can have historical interest. I well remember when in 1985 I broke into an ice cave high on the north-east ridge which had been left, Marie Celeste-like, by Joe Tasker and Pete Boardman who died high up the mountain in 1982.

Another expedition, led by Bonington to the southwest face of Everest in 1975, left such a well established Camp 4 that it can still be seen clinging high up the face.

Yours faithfully, JONATHAN TINKER (Director), OTT Expeditions, 62 Nettleham Road, Sheffield S8 8SX, January 5.

Kinsey's contribution

From Dr A. F. Dixon

Sir, Your leading article of January 2 was rather negative concerning Professor Alfred Kinsey's scientific abilities. He personally conducted about 8,000 of the 20,000 interviews upon which the two volumes, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, were based. This was a considerable achievement even by modern standards.

Whilst there were biases in the sample, the great pioneering contributions made by Kinsey and his colleagues should not be dismissed; the books contain an enormous amount of information which has proven of inestimable value to students of sexuality.

Sex research is a most difficult field, but an important one. We have little to be complacent about in this country where problems of human sexuality are concerned. Sex education is inadequate to the extent that we have one of the highest rates of under-age pregnancies in Europe. Rates of divorce are increasing, as are frequencies of sexually related crime. The cost to the nation in monetary terms must be immense, to say nothing of the misery caused.

Yours sincerely, ALAN DIXON (Head, Medical Research Council Group on the Development and Integration of Behaviour), University of Cambridge, Sub-department of Animal Behaviour, Madingley, Cambridge CB3 8AA. af222@hermes.cam.ac.uk January 2.

Spectres at the feast

From Mr Brian Conneller

Sir, An article on trusts published on the front page of *Weekend Money* on December 20 was illustrated by a large illuminated initial containing a picture of typical medieval feasting with hogsheds, tame monkeys, etc.

The caption underneath read: "From the 13th century, trusts enabled the Franciscans to live in grand properties bestowed on them by wealthy individuals who retained the legal ownership without the benefit". Clearly the implication is that the Franciscans, contrary to their vow of poverty, lived the life of Riley in palatial circumstances and here is a picture of them doing so.

A quick count of heads in the picture produces one, possibly two Benedictines, three, possibly four, doctors of divinity, four clerics in minor orders and assorted laymen. There is not a grey habit, not a white cord, not a bare foot to be seen among them. You might as well have labelled a picture of drunken sailors as "disgraceful behaviour of the Household Cavalry".

Your obedient servant, BRIAN CONNELLER, 22 St Mary's Road, Ealing W5 5ES, January 1.

Letters for publication may be faxed to 0171-782 5046. e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

Terror in Algeria

From the Director of Amnesty International

Sir, The Foreign Secretary is to be congratulated on using the occasion of the UK's presidency of the EU to propose a human rights mission to Algeria headed by the UK, Austria and Luxembourg (report, January 7; see also letters, January 6, 7, 8).

Many commentators have reacted with understandable bewilderment to the appalling catalogue of killings, torture and disappearances in Algeria and doubted what could be achieved by the intervention of the UK or other European states. We do not share that defeatism.

Since the outbreak of the current conflict in 1992, Amnesty International has regularly conducted visits to Algeria and published extensive documentation on cases and patterns of human rights abuses committed by the Algerian security forces, by armed opposition groups which call themselves "Islamic", and by militias armed by the State.

However, state censorship has hampered the collection of evidence on the full extent of the abuses and the identity of the killers. The Algerian authorities know that hard evidence is the prerequisite of effective international pressure.

We have therefore called for a special session of the UN Human Rights Commission and for international human rights investigators to be allowed into Algeria. The EU mission would be an important first step.

The Algerian authorities repeatedly assert that their internal problems are no one's concern but their own. We believe, on the contrary, that when a State fails to safeguard the basic human rights of its people, that becomes everyone's concern.

Yours faithfully, DAVID BULL, Director, Amnesty International, United Kingdom, 99-119 Rosebery Avenue, EC1R 4RE, January 7.

Stubbs thoroughbred

From Miss Helen Stephenson

Sir, Whistlejacket (article and picture, January 6; letter, January 7) looks delighted to have escaped the confines of Wentworth Woodhouse, South Yorkshire, at last. The poor horse had to contend with listening to endless education lectures in the room where he hung during the occupancy of the house by a physical education college until relatively recently.

Our chairs did not face him: he saw only our backs. At least now his audience will appreciate his presence.

Yours faithfully, HELEN STEPHENSON, 17 Coopers Road, Little Heath, Herefordshire EN6 UG, January 7.

Film censorship

From Dr Phillip Hallam-Baker

Sir, Recent letters on the future of the British Board of Film Classification (December 23, January 1) ask whether and to what extent films for adult viewing should be censored. It seems to me that in the age of satellites, the Internet and DVD (digital versatile discs) the question to be asked is whether censorship of any kind is practicable.

The threat from DVD is particularly insidious. To protect profits, US film studios have forced DVD manufacturers to introduce a distribution system which makes it impossible for any film intended for the US market to be played on a UK player.

This strategy is likely to work only so long as the capital cost of the DVD player is significant but in time that cost will drop to roughly the same as that of CD players currently retailing in the US for \$60 or less. The film

Euro analogy with the 'finest hour'

From Mr David Cox

Sir, Michael Gove may well be right to imply that the British people's resolution or lack of it during 1940 continues to matter enormously ("Winston's lesson for William", January 6). Yet the evidence he offers in support of their supposed bellicosity does not pass muster.

It is true that Churchill enjoyed support in the rather primitive polls of the period, even before he made his stirring broadcasts. It would have been odd if this had not been the case, since he came to power having been proved right about Hitler after a decade of warnings had gone unheeded by his predecessors.

This did not mean, however, that people shared Churchill's enthusiasm for a war to the death. As Brian Walden pointed out in *Walden on Heroes* on BBC2 (review, Television, January 7), people trusted Churchill's judgment because of his record: had he recommended acceptance of the deal with Hitler which appeared to be on offer, the indications are that they would have been all too happy to go along with him.

Gove himself acknowledges "the appeasing temper of the Tory Establishment" but any idea that this was offset by the intrepid defiance of the working class would owe more to sentiment than reality.

In search of Mr W. H.

From Dr J. M. Rollett

Sir, Mr Graham Clark and Mr Miles Harper, in their entertaining letters of January 3 and 8 respectively, have both apparently overlooked a point which was referred to in Nigel Hawkes's admirable account (December 31) of my paper on "Mr W. H.", the "onlie begetter" of Shakespeare's Sonnets.

While there are 180 three-letter words to be found reading down the columns of all possible arrays formed from the Dedication, and 42 four-letter words, there are only three five-letter words — viz. Henry, tress, waste — and one obvious five-letter fragment, "esley". The fact that two of these four occur in the full name "Henry Wriothesley" is highly suggestive.

Since, in addition, "wr" and "lth" are found in the eight-row array containing "esley", one is strongly inclined to suspect the work of a cryptographer. If the odds against such a result happening by chance are calculated, as they are in my paper, that suspicion becomes a near certainty.

Yours faithfully, JOHN ROLLETT, 29 Park Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 3SX. johnmr@angliamed.co.uk January 3.

studios thus created an incentive for UK consumers to purchase their DVD players and discs from the US, bypassing the BBFC entirely.

Film censorship is thus doomed to fail. However, since one can imagine any number of authoritarian measures justified by the "need" for it, the questions we should now be asking are whether such measures will be effective, what harm will they cause, and what net benefit (if any) can be shown to result from them.

Yours faithfully, PHILLIP HALLAM-BAKER, 73 Merriam Street, Somerville, Massachusetts 02143, January 1.

From the Director of the British Board of Film Classification

Sir, Mr Dave Godin (letter, January 1) might like to know that the information he wants is already available from the BBFC. Every month we publish comprehensive lists of all films

and videos classified, and every two months that information is consolidated into alphabetical lists of all films classified since 1983 and of all videos classified since the Video Recordings Act came into force in 1985.

In all these lists, the precise running time of the approved version is given; since 1976 the lists have always included an indication of which works have been cut and, if so, by how much. Titles rejected are also listed. Anyone wanting to subscribe to these lists may do so. In a few months such information will be available on our new Website.

Yours faithfully, JAMES FERMAN, Director, British Board of Film Classification, 3 Soho Square, W1V 6HD, January 8.

OBITUARIES

JOHN WELLS

John Wells, writer, actor and director, died of lymphoma yesterday aged 61. He was born on November 17, 1936.

— though the two men did not speak. Surrounded by busy sportsmen and rugby blues, Wells — once he was demobbed — lived like a St Edmund Hall in Oxford, to be ungenerous until, after a successful audition for the Experimental Theatre Company, he appeared in a cabaret at Christ Church and scored an immediate hit with upper-class undergraduates and more particularly their Gucci-clad girlfriends.



John Wells, writer, actor and director, died of lymphoma yesterday aged 61. He was born on November 17, 1936.

In 1964, following the arrival of the Labour Government, he and Ingram began producing Mrs Wilson's Diary in Private Eye. It continued until Harold Wilson's retirement in 1976. Prefaced by an atrociously bad poem, it portrayed Wilson as a Walter Mitty trying vainly to ape Churchill and Kennedy, his admiring wife (Gladys), a homely Northern housewife bringing him cocoa and Wincarnis Tonic Wine. In 1967 Joan Littlewood commissioned a play based on the Diary, which opened at the Theatre Royal, Stratford, and later transferred to the Criterion, where it ran for several months.

In 1980, at the beginning of Margaret Thatcher's long term of office, Wells rejoined his old comrade Richard Ingrams at Private Eye to work together with him on their most successful collaboration, the Dear Bill letters — a fortnightly commentary on political events seen through the eyes of the Prime Minister's husband, Denis. He was imagined as a P. G. Wodehouse character, interested mainly in golf and drinking ("storts", "tinucures" and "electric soup" were some of his pet names for alcoholic refreshment). The invented Denis bore little relation to the real person — a hard-headed and fairly shrewd businessman — but later, possibly in response to pressure from the Tory party's image-makers, Denis began to play up to the popular image of the boozey, hen-pecked buffoon.

RAFAEL CALZADA

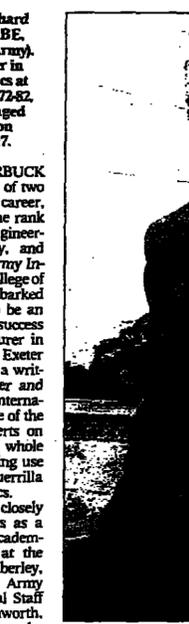
Rafael Jose Luis Fernandez de la Calzada y Ferrer, restaurateur, died on December 13 aged 83. He was born in Navia, Spain, on August 30, 1914.

common enemy of communism could not be realised and, after a period of fierce street fighting with the communists, the Republican resistance collapsed, and he was ended and Casado and his followers, including Calzada, sailed for England in a British warship.

England in March 1939, he was a refugee with no money and no job. Yet he cut a romantic figure. With his dark good looks, heavy accent (which he never lost), aquiline nose and haughty demeanour, he was every inch the Spanish grandee. So it was not entirely surprising that at this time he met and fell in love with Lucy Lay, a beautiful young Englishwoman working at the Royal Institute of International Affairs. They remained inseparable for more than fifty years.

range a subtle alteration of the table plan if M15 required. In the postwar years, Calzada was managing director of Epicure Holdings, Sir Denys Lawson's restaurant and hotel group. In 1967, impatient with the Government's lack of support for the restaurant industry, he rejoined the Restaurateurs Association of Great Britain. He was the first chairman and the first registered member, with Moe Prunier as his deputy. He was succeeded, in turn, by Robert Carrier and Pru Leith; today the association has 1,600 members.

MAJOR-GENERAL RICHARD CLUTTERBUCK



Major-General Richard Clutterbuck, CB, OBE, Engineer-in-Chief (Army), 1968-70, and Reader in International Politics at Exeter University, 1972-82, died on January 6 aged 80. He was born on November 22, 1917.

Major-General Richard Clutterbuck enjoyed a combination of two lives. After a military career, in which he reached the rank of major-general as Engineer-in-Chief of the Army, and subsequently Senior Army Instructor at the Royal College of Defence Studies, he embarked on what turned out to be an outstanding record of success in academia. As a lecturer in International Politics at Exeter University, he became a writer, lecturer, broadcaster and consultant with an international reputation as one of the leading academic experts on political conflict — the whole spectrum of the widening use of terrorism and guerrilla warfare in world politics.

When he retired from teaching at Exeter in 1983, he was granted an honorary research fellowship during the tenure of which he carried on his consultancies, his overseas research visits, teaching groups of US students from Pennsylvania University, and completing 11 of his 20 books, the last of which, Families, Drugs and Crime is to be published posthumously this year.

PROFESSOR ROBERT STEEL

Professor Robert Steel, CBE, geographer, died on December 29 aged 82. He was born on July 31, 1915.

and of the governors of Westhill College of Higher Education, and a member of the Social Science Research Council and the council of the Open University.

about these problems, not simply study them. For the Institute of British Geographers Robert Steel was editor of its Transactions, 1951-60, and President in 1968; he served on the executive committee of the Geographical Association, 1967-70, and was president in 1973. Other commitments included the British Council, the Royal African Society and the Universities Council for Adult Education. He also served on the councils of the universities of Lesotho and Swaziland and was founder president of the Commonwealth Geographical Bureau.

with his friends, however, and contributed to the early issues of Private Eye under the pseudonym J. Campbell Murdoch. He also appeared on stage at the opening night of the Establishment Club, getting back to Eton in time for Early School at 7.30am. He left Eton after two years and joined the staff of Private Eye, working with Ingrams, Rushton, Peter Cook, Barry Fantoni and Claud Cockburn.

Retirements from the Church

- The Rev Sarah Caldwell, Assistant Curate, Belmont St John (Southwark) to resign January 18. The Rev Wm Fish, Priest-in-Charge, Newlyn St Newlyn, and Religious Education Adviser, (Truro) retired December 31. The Rev Ivan Lilley, Priest-in-Charge, Langold (Southwell) to retire January 31. The Rev James Mitchell-James, Vicar, Titchfield St Peter (Portsmouth) to resign January 31. The Rev Curwen Rawlinson, Rector, Uley W Owlpen and Nympsfield (Gloucester) to retire January 31. The Rev Douglas Stevens, Rector, Woodston, and Priest-in-Charge, Flenton (Ely) to retire January 31 on ill health grounds. The Rev Shirley Smith, Team Chaplain, Portsmouth Hospitals (Portsmouth) to resign January 31. The Rev Richard Watson Williams, Vicar, Teagle Balsall (Birmingham) to retire April 20.

University news

- Oxford: The Queen's College: To scholarships: Andrew John Lives, formerly of Albany College, London. Tuan Peng Sng, formerly of Tanjong Pagar College, Singapore. William Salemanovic, formerly of Cheltenham Ladies College, Gloucestershire. Benny Sykes, formerly of Royal Belfast Academical Institution. Andrew John Wilson, formerly of Taylor's College Selangor, Malaysia. Helen Virginia Tiddle, formerly of Sale Grammar School, Cheshire. Christopher Gordon, formerly of Watford Boys Grammar School. Andrew John Wilson, formerly of The King's School, Chester. Adam Harvey Whitaker, formerly of Stoney Hill School, Gloucestershire. Christopher James Woolf, formerly of Bradford Grammar School. To exhibitions: Michele Emile Barbour, formerly of Stamford High School. Polly Clementia Bayly, formerly of St Mary's Farm College, Middleborough. Danielle Claire Bartfield, formerly of Maudslayi Girls' High School. Patrick Winford Denison, formerly of

"ALKESTIS" FIRST PERFORMANCE

Rutland Boughton's Alkestis was given for the first time in London at Covent Garden last night with decided success. The composer conducted via Mr. Pitt, who was unwell, and Miss Kathleen Dean, who took the part of the Handmaid at Glastonbury, took the place of Miss Eda Bennie at the last moment. Those who heard this opera will probably have had two strong impressions. First, of the stately grace of the chorus. They did not always know their music exactly, as was perhaps natural, but they made it sound musical, which was the important thing. We should be inclined to attribute this in great part to the librettist Professor Gilbert Murray's words are always full of life and poetry, and though we seldom heard them, they do not make all the difference to the chorus, for it is impossible to make dead words live. One thinks of a Greek chorus as a byword which keeps the driving force of emotion steady by its tranquillising platitudes. But this translation substitutes for such tags lines like "Thy death is a song and a fullness of fame 'Till the heart of the singer is left desolate," and that is worth singing. The impressive thing is the continuous presence of the chorus more than what they sing: the action of the protagonists gains

ON THIS DAY

January 12, 1924 Rutland Boughton (1878-1960) had an unorthodox career. His hope of establishing a kind of English Bayreuth at Glastonbury never came to fruition. His best known opera, The Immortal Hour, ran for some time in London, but Alkestis made less impact.

ON THIS DAY

January 12, 1924 Apollo or Thanatos, and Herakles's musk would be better suited to Thersites. Its virtue is its inoffensive usefulness; it is never inappropriate and seldom obtrusive; the opening scene between Apollo and Thanatos, where we want to gleam as much as we can of the reason for a man's permitting the wife he loved to die for him, but could hear nothing, was an exception.

ON THIS DAY

January 12, 1924 Mr. Hyde's beautiful voice made the part of Admetus ring true in the second act, especially when he lamented with the chorus. The scene with Phereas is too long a quarrel between relations at a funeral is perhaps true to life, but not a thing to dwell on. Mr Parker is eminently suited by tuba-like voice for Herakles; one could wish there were some way of showing on the stage that a man was enjoying the good things of life without having to exhibit him as vulgarly drunk. A word should be said for Miss Lemon, as Admetus's son; her interpretation was simple and true.

ON THIS DAY

January 12, 1924 We are not sure that Euripides does not contribute more than all the rest to the making of this opera. He is so simple and direct. These things are — that is what one feels. And all the things he thinks of when the moment comes to say goodbye, what we do think of but can't express. And death heralding the procession. We seem to get such a sweep of feeling by such very simple means.

UNDER THE SKIN OF SPORT

TAKING THE PLUNGE

British swimmers looking to make waves at world championships PAGE 27

LYNNE TRUSS

On why Paul Merson is looking back in anger PAGE 33

HIGH AND MIGHTY

Does ballooning offer more than hot air? PAGE 38

SHIP SHAPE

Paul Standbridge takes stock of rivals in Whitbread yacht race PAGE 37

PLUS Reports and scores from all the Premiership football matches

THE TIMES SPORT 16 PAGES

MONDAY JANUARY 12 1998

PRETENDERS TO THE CROWN SLIP BACK IN TITLE RACE



Flowers, the Blackburn goalkeeper, dives in vain as Sturridge strikes the first of his two goals at Pride Park yesterday. The result left Manchester United seven points clear. Photograph: Marc Aspland

Derby dent Rovers' pride

By OLIVER HOLT FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT

IT IS no longer enough, it seems, for Manchester United to get one good result every weekend. As the championship flows inexorably back towards Old Trafford, their former challengers have developed a habit of hastening the inevitable. Yesterday, against a Derby County team riven by injury and suspension, it was the turn of Blackburn Rovers to oblige.

The team that could have cut United's lead at the top of the FA Carling Premiership to five points dominated a fast-flowing, entertaining game at Pride Park. But a combination of profligate finishing and black defending contrived to hand a victory to Derby that left Blackburn stuck in third place and the champions seven points in front of Chelsea. Two goals from Dean Sturridge and a late third from Paulo Wanchope, that snuffed out the hope Chris Sutton had given the visitors with a precise glancing header four minutes from the final whistle, preserved Derby's

proud unbeaten record at Pride Park, moved them into sixth place and boosted their hopes of securing an unlikely UEFA Cup position.

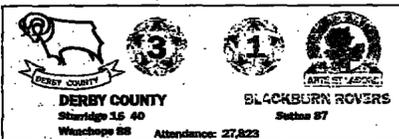
For those entertaining lingering hopes that United can be caught, though, it is almost time to give up the ghost. Their manager, Alex Ferguson, spoke once about Blackburn having "to do a Devon Loch" to lose the champion-

TOP OF TABLE

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	22	15	4	3	51	16	49
Blackburn	22	11	8	3	40	22	43
Liverpool	21	12	4	5	39	24	41
Arsenal	21	10	7	4	37	19	40
Derby	22	10	5	7	37	29	35
Leeds	22	10	5	7	31	29	35

ship. They may not be that close to the finishing line yet, but it already feels as though they would need to be taken out and shot to stop them winning the title.

"Today's result affects the title race quite considerably," Roy Hodgson, the Blackburn manager, said. "It increases their lead and, with 16 matches left, they have got a healthy



margin. We can only draw comfort from the fact that other teams have squandered commanding leads in the past. "I am not suggesting for one minute that Manchester United will do that, but while hope exists we will continue to live in hope. Our dissatisfaction today is dissatisfaction with our performance rather than dissatisfaction with the league table. United have established their supremacy at the moment, though, and they look like they are invincible."

Blackburn began with an authority of their own yesterday. In the early stages, they looked as though they might rip a scratch Derby side, missing Stefano Eranio, Lee Carsley, Christian Dailly and Darryl Powell, to pieces but Gallacher shot straight at Poom in the second minute

struck it right-footed past the advancing Flowers. He ran towards the corner flag, pulling the corners of his mouth with his fingers to emphasise his smile.

Five minutes before half-time, after Blackburn had failed to make any impression on a Derby side content to sit back, soak up pressure and wait for the chance to counter-attack, Sturridge struck again. This time, it was Croft who failed to clear and Baiano who made him pay. He scurried past the stumbling left back and played a short pass to Sturridge, whose snap-shot was deflected past Flowers by Hendry.

The second half followed much the same pattern, Blackburn pressing but creating little from a sterile midfield and Derby moving forward when they could. Henchoz missed one glorious chance to pull a goal back when he volleyed Sutton's fine headed lay-off over the bar from ten yards out in the 65th minute and, two minutes later, Sutton himself was denied when Poom blocked his shot with his right foot.

Sutton finally reduced the arrears with a fine glancing header from Filteroff's chip in the 87th minute but, when play moved up to the other end, Sherwood became locked in a grotesque dance with Wanchope as the ball bobbed around their waists. When, finally, it dropped, the Costa Rican was the first to react and he volleyed the ball past Flowers from close range.

Arsenal take honours... 28 United march on... 29 Nationwide League... 30 Scottish commentary... 31

Afterwards, Smith was asked what it was like managing the mercurial Wanchope when the team was under the cosh. "Exactly what it is like when you're not under the cosh," he said. "He drives you round the bend."

DERBY COUNTY (4-3-1-3) M Poom - D Viana, J Sornac, S Etkin (sub: R Williams, G Poyet), C Powell - J Hurst, J Hunt, G Powell - F Baiano - D Sturridge (sub: D Burton 88), P Wanchope. BLACKBURN ROVERS (4-4-2) T Flowers - J Kenna, S Henchoz, C Hendry, G Croft (sub: J Wilcox, 69) - S Ripley, G Filteroff, T Sherwood, D Dal - C Sutton, R Gallacher. Referee: G Poul.

By DAVID HANDS RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

LONDON Scottish expect to hear today that Bath have imposed a long suspension on the player whose bite left one of their flankers requiring 25 stitches in an ear wound and facing the possibility of cosmetic surgery. The incident occurred in the Tetley's Blue Cup game between the clubs at the Recreation Ground on Saturday and has led to a demand for financial compensation for Simon Fenn, the injured player. London-Scottish officials were dismayed yesterday that Bath's

Bath to suspend player for biting

investigation had yet to uncover the guilty party; they believe they know who was responsible for the damage.

Fenn, 26, who joined Scottish from Manly, the Sydney club, last November, was playing his first senior game in the Exiles' back row during the postponed fourth-round fix, which Bath eventually won by a single point. The incident occurred after a scrum went down late in the first half; Fenn emerged bleeding badly, his head was bandaged,

but he eventually left the field with 15 minutes remaining. He went to Roehampton Hospital on Saturday night and returned.

Commentary... 34

there yesterday, to establish whether the wound was infected and whether a skin graft would be required. Meanwhile, three Bath officials carried out an investigation among their players, the results of which should be known today. "It's for them to identify the player," Richard Yerbury, the London Scottish chief executive, said yesterday. "We have strong views about who it is, but let's see if they can do their own homework. It would be far better if the player himself put his hand up, even if it meant the end of his career."

"London Scottish are disappointed no Bath player has as yet been willing to accept responsibility for the incident," a club statement said. "We expect Bath to complete their investigation as soon as possible, identify the player and propose the appropriate punishment. We would expect a lengthy ban, for a minimum of 12 months, together with financial compensation." Tony Swift, the Bath chief executive, said his club was treating the incident "with the seriousness it deserves. If the issue can be solved, we will do something as soon as we can, but we have to be very careful, both regarding the rights of the player injured, the two clubs and any accusation made against any of our players."

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NEWS

Blair 'roadshow' to sell reforms

Ministers raised the prospect of means-testing for virtually all state benefits — although they prefer to talk about "affluence testing". High earners, already braced for the possible taxation of child benefit, could lose disability benefits, while maternity benefit may be capped.

Harriet Harman, the Social Security Secretary, said: "There has been a shift in the social security spending away from the poorest towards those further up the income scale... I'm sure that that can't be right". Page 1

Defiant Cook plans to marry

Robin Cook declared his love for Gaynor Regan and announced that they intend to get married when his divorce is completed. She will accompany the Foreign Secretary on an official trip to the White House this week. Page 1

Peace talks resume

The Stormont peace talks resume today having received a timely boost when the Progressive Unionist Party abandoned its threat to stay away. The latest victim of sectarian killings was the husband of Gerry Adams's niece. Pages 1, 2

Robinson questions

Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster General, faces Commons questions this week for the first time since the controversy over his offshore trust began. Page 2

Girl dies in brawl

Rachel Lung, 20, was stabbed to death and her first-date companion seriously hurt after a brawl involving 40 people broke out at a country pub. Page 3

Dome denial

Peter Mandelson denied claims by Stephen Bayley, the Dome's former creative director, that he had behaved like a "dictator" over the project. Page 4

Television 'cleared'

The recent arrival of television on one of the world's most remote islands suggests watching does not make children violent, a study claims. Page 5

'Shackled' mayor

The elected London mayor proposed by the Government will have none of the sweeping powers of American city mayors, a report says. Page 6

Warm Britain rivals Mediterranean

Britain enjoyed record January temperatures over the weekend with a warm spell that is expected to last until Wednesday. Much of the country rivalled the Mediterranean yesterday with temperatures around 16C. Surfers who crowded beaches in Devon and Cornwall were delighted but melting snow in Scotland left skiers despondent. Page 1

Cambridge rap

Cambridge is wooing black and Asian teenagers with a "youth speak" prospectus that emphasises most of its students are "completely normal", and enjoy short university terms. Page 7

Taxing traffic

John Prescott's plans to reduce traffic congestion are likely to fail unless he taxes company cars and charges motorists for driving in city centres, a former adviser said. Page 8

Asian rescue 'wrong'

The US Senate banking committee's Republican chairman said a White House/IMF Asia rescue package was against the US national interest. Page 10

Tokyo loves Blair

Tony Blair worked adoring Tokyo crowds as if running for election, public outbreaks of "Blair fever" greeting his every move. Page 11

Euro court battle

Four professors, arguing that the euro robs them of their basic rights, today go to a German court to try to stop European economic and monetary union. Page 13

New Gandhi icon

Sonia Gandhi, a new icon of Indian politics, ended seven years of silence after the assassination of her husband Rajiv to enter the election fray. Page 14



Tens of thousands of people were left homeless after an earthquake struck China's northern Hebei province. Page 11

BUSINESS

Double success: Boots the Chemist wants to capitalise on the success of its Advantage loyalty card and combine it with the Medilink card it issues to those buying prescriptions. Page 48

On its way: One of the most important projects in the government Private Finance Initiative — the £214 million Norfolk & Norwich Hospital — was approved. Page 48

Damages claim: The founder of Quadrant Healthcare is claiming an estimated £10 million in compensation and damages from the Cambridge drug development company. Page 45

Asian partners: The UK can form business partnerships with China and Japan, says the President of the Board of Trade. Page 46

FEATURES

Brown study: In our serialisation of the Chancellor's biography, Paul Rotherham tells how Gordon Brown became a "victim of his own resilience" when rumours spread about his personal life. Page 17

Ocean riches: Huge reserves of valuable minerals are about to be scooped from the ocean floor. Nigel Hawkes reports. Page 15

Alzheimer's: Scientists are getting closer to understanding Alzheimer's disease. Page 15

FASHION

Swinging In: Sportmax has designs on a Swinging London revival, says Grace Bradberry. Page 16

ARTS

Melvyn Bragg: "In America, there is a massive body of opinion calling for compensation for the descendants of slaves. I think the sum being asked for is roughly £60,000 a descendant". Page 18

Dome rivals: Imaginative millennial projects all over Britain, such as the one at Rotherham, are going to provide stiff competition for the Greenwich dome. Page 18

Entertaining duo: "I left the theatre feeling I had enjoyed an hour or so of civilised fun," Benedict Nightingale on the latest West End show from Kit and the Widow. Page 19

Jazz legend: Humphrey Lyttelton celebrated his golden jubilee as a bandleader with a concert that brought together many of his old friends. Page 19



TOMORROW

IN THE TIMES

ARTS Gillian Wearing: why her new exhibition will make you think again about modern art

LAW When a child is killed, but no one is charged with murder or even manslaughter

SPORTS

Football: Blackburn Rovers's hopes of closing the gap at the top of the FA Carling Premiership suffered a setback when they lost 3-1 to Derby County. Page 25

Cricket: The latest teething problem to hit England's West Indies tour came when the pitch for the opening match in Jamaica was declared unfit. Page 26

Swimming: Paul Palmer remains Great Britain's best hope of a medal in the world championships that begin in Perth today. Page 27

Rugby union: A lengthy ban is the only course open to the game's authorities when they identify the culprit in the biting incident that left a London Scottish player needing surgery after the match at Bath on Saturday. Page 34

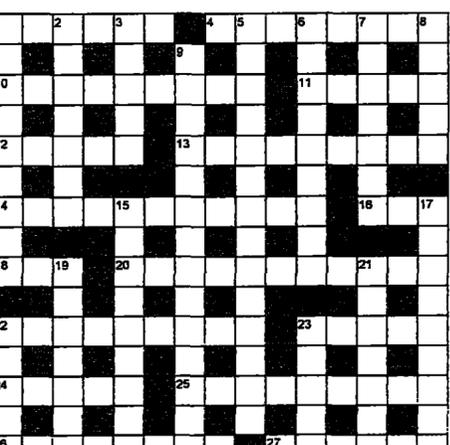
Schools sport: Winchester College underlined that it is possible to combine academic excellence with sporting success in the Knole Run cross-country race. Page 36

Sailing: Paul Standbridge, the skipper of Merit Cup, reports on the fourth-leg trials and tribulations in the Whitbread Round the World Race. Page 37

LETTERS

There is a lot of apologising for the past, but one group has been silent: the former Italian Communists, now the Party of the Democratic Left. It seems they prefer to forget duplicity and human rights abuses — Il Giornale (Milan)

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,686



- ACROSS — 1 Leave secretly from Embankment, quietly crossing City area (6). 4 Forcefully put one's foot down before oriental flight (8). 10 Prevent a couple of new drivers landing on trees (9). 11 Bring success to expedition (5). 12 Overprotect the kids' mother (5). 13 Reminiscent of Morse's last case (9). 14 Foresaw opposing head being taken in by detectives (11). 16 Source of corn required for horse (3). 15 Milk on this is regularly available (5). 20 Accomplish of crook freed at once (11). 22 Everything I concealed in old-fashioned mattress (9). 23 It sounds like swell material (5).

The solution of Saturday's Prize Puzzle No 20,685 will appear next Saturday. The five winners will each receive a £20 book token.

AA INFORMATION

Latest Road and Weather conditions. AA Weather: All regions 0236 444 910. UK Roads - All regions 0236 401 410. AA Motoring 0236 401 200. AA Car reports by fax 0236 410 200.

HOURS OF DARKNESS

Table showing hours of darkness for various locations including London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and others. Columns include Sun sets, Moon sets, and Moon rises.

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FORECAST

General: early rain over England and Wales should die out, although southern counties of England will probably stay cloudy with local mist and drizzle. Central and northern England and Wales should become brighter. Eastern Scotland should also be mostly dry with sunshine at times but western Scotland and Northern Ireland will have squally showers, heavy and hazy locally, with brief bright intervals.

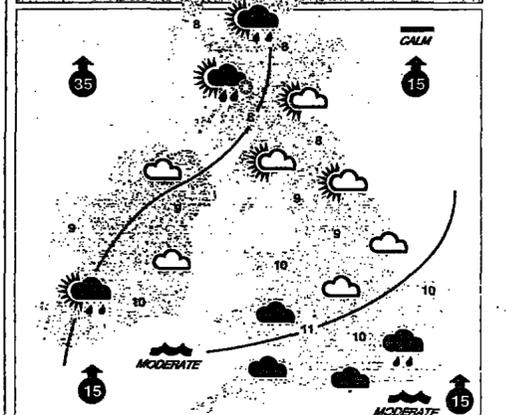
AROUND BRITAIN YESTERDAY

Table showing weather conditions around Britain yesterday. Columns include location, sun, rain, max, and min temperatures.

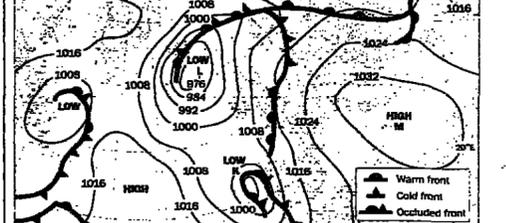
ASROAD

Table showing road conditions across various regions including London, Midlands, South, and Wales. Columns include location, sun, rain, max, and min temperatures.

NOON TODAY



Changes to the chart below from noon: low K will run northeast, deepening slightly; low L will drift northeast, filling; high M will drift south and decline



FREE TIMES

Table showing free times for various locations across the UK. Columns include location, AM, HT, PM, and HT times.

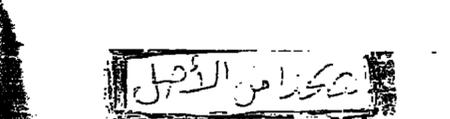
HIGHEST & LOWEST

Yesterday: highest day temp: Ayles, Highland, 15C (59F); lowest day max: Tockley, North Yorkshire, 08C (46F); highest night: Stranorlar, Outer Hebrides, 0.75m; highest sunshine: Corner, Norfolk, 4.3h

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Craig Lord detects a new mood of confidence at the world swimming championships in Perth

Palmer the best hope in Britain's gold quest

CONFIDENT. Injury-free and in good form they certainly appear to be, but the Great Britain swimming team for the world championships still had one problem yesterday: their Speedo suits had not arrived.

The suits were sent from home well in time and arrived in Sydney last Wednesday — but it might have been easier to get a Chinese team through customs. Airport officials impounded the package because the address label was not filled out properly.

Only after a call from Paul Bush, the British team manager, to David Metcalfe, chief executive of UPS, the carrier, and, ultimately, the intervention of Chris Ellison, a Western Australia senator, was the red tape cut for the suits to be sent on to Perth.

They were due to arrive at the British team's hotel late last night, just in time for the first of seven days of racing at the Challenge Stadium that will serve as the first serious test for the national team on a world stage since the Olympic Games in 1996, when Paul Palmer won the silver medal in the 400 metres freestyle and Graeme Smith the bronze in the 1,500 metres.

Of Palmer, Ian Turner, the coach, said yesterday: "He's more focused and better prepared than at any time I can remember. He's put in an enormous amount of work, more than in '95 and '96 before Atlanta, and he's ready to go." Palmer, 23, today will compete in the 200 metres freestyle, the event in which he became European champion in Seville last August.

Traditionally, a good start for the first British medal hope to take the plunge has, to some extent, set the tone for the squad. No more, said Derek Snelling, British swimming's first national performance director. He wants every member of the squad in Perth to achieve at least two swims a day per event, doing well enough in their heat to reach the final (for the top eight), or consolation final (top 16).

"This is a whole different team than British teams of the past," he said. "Every single one of them is positive and confident. They don't just talk about it, they believe they can win, they believe they have their best swim in them."

They will need to find it, too.

Turner said. He predicted that the world record would be broken in the 200 metres freestyle today and said Palmer's better hope would be in the 400 metres that brought him Olympic success. "Paul believes the 200 metres is ready to move on. We also thought the 200 was an incidental consequence of him being a great 400 swimmer."

Turner accepted much of the blame for Palmer's failure to win the 400 metres in Seville. "It wasn't particularly well-swum races, we didn't do what we'd done in Atlanta — go out and stay there." Palmer would not make the same mistake twice: "He's a big, strong lad and doesn't know when he's beaten."

That confidence stems from the training conditions that Palmer, once restricted by a small local pool, now enjoys at the University of Bath's Olympic-sized pool, the first centre of excellence for swimming in Britain, funded by National Lottery money, since the arrival of Snelling after the Olympic Games in 1996.

Palmer, after racing only the clock in his youth, is now pressed in training at Bath by Andrew Clayton, Mark Stevens and Marc Spackman, three of the six members of the 4 x 200 metres freestyle relay, an event in which Britain became European champions for the first time last August. "Paul sees it as a godsend now," Turner said. "Every session is like a training camp, it's a real competitive situation."

A relay medal will be much harder to come by in Perth, but there are hopes for Smith in the 1,500 metres if he can rediscover the form of Atlanta, and, at the other end of the spectrum, Mark Foster, who faces the might of Alexander Popov, behind whom he finished runner-up in the 50 metres freestyle in Seville.

There also are high hopes for Stephen Parry and James Hickman in the 200 metres butterfly. Hickman, the world short-course champion, missed the European championships because of illness, but Parry took the bronze medal.

The pair meet in the heats alongside Ugur Tanner, of the United States. "I've beaten him before," Parry, from Liverpool, who won the NCAA title in America last year, said. He seemed more concerned



Palmer, the Olympic 400 metres freestyle silver medal-winner, is prepared to go one better this week

yesterday that the great shorts he had put in the wash with his white team kit might bring new meaning to the American term "liney".

If indication were needed that the British team is more serious now than for quite some time, the mood has spread to the women, who aim to wipe away memories of having just two finalists at the world championships four years ago and only one in Atlanta.

They called a women's "confidence meeting" yesterday to reinforce their view that the hard work that they have put in makes them good enough to take on allcomers — "including anyone who's taken drugs", Snelling said.

Drugs inquiry may widen

FINA, the world governing body, yesterday acknowledged that the drugs found in the luggage of a Chinese swimmer at Sydney airport on Thursday might have been intended for the whole Chinese team.

FINA's doping panel is investigating Yuan Yuan, the swimmer, and Zhou Zhewen, her coach, who accepted responsibility for the presence of the growth hormones.

Gunnar Werner, the FINA secretary, said: "The press release wording from customs was, 'is or contains growth hormone'. We need to know if

it's 1 per cent or 100 per cent of hormone for the whole team."

Werner's statement confirmed that FINA might extend the investigation into the 13 visits to other members of the Chinese team, if not the entire Chinese federation. The World Swimming Coaches Association (WSCA) has called for just that. "We want an investigation of the Chinese programme, from sports schools up through the whole system," John Leonard, the WSCA president, said.

WSCA members have also called on FINA to carry out blood testing and freeze spec-

imens to deter cheats who might fear detection in five or ten years' time and face retrospective disqualification.

The doping panel, which is made up of three lawyers, ended its interviewing of witnesses in the Yuan case yesterday and will receive the scientific report from the Australian laboratory that tested the vials today.

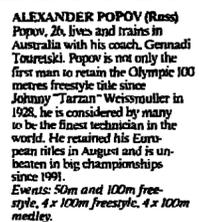
Yuan and Zhou face a minimum four-year suspension from the sport, while China will fly the offenders home to an uncertain future soon after the panel's decision.

SIX MEDAL CONTENDERS TO WATCH

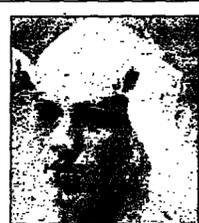
TOM DOLAN (US)
Dolan, 22, is the boy who got sand kicked in his face. In water, he is a giant. An asthmatic who has suffered attacks during big races, Dolan is considered one of the hardest working and most versatile swimmers in the world. World record-holder and Olympic champion over 400 metres medley, Dolan believes the clean dry air of Perth will help him "put the world record in a place no one will touch it for 25 years".
Events: 200m and 400m medley.



ALEXANDER POPOV (Russia)
Popov, 26, lives and trains in Australia with his coach, Gennadi Touretski. Popov is not only the first man to retain the Olympic 100 metres freestyle title since Johnny "Tarzan" Weissmuller in 1928, he is considered by many to be the finest technician in the world. He retained his European titles in August and is unbeaten in big championships since 1991.
Events: 50m and 100m freestyle, 4 x 100m freestyle, 4 x 100m medley.



MICHAEL KLIM (Aust)
Klim, 20, was born in Poland but has lived most of his life in Australia. Last year, he broke the 100 metres butterfly world record, held by Denis Pankratov, of Russia. Klim is also the world No 1 over 200 metres freestyle and among the best over 100 metres freestyle. His schedule of seven events is one of the busiest of the championships.
Events: 100m and 200m freestyle, 100m and 200m butterfly, 4 x 100m freestyle, 4 x 200m free style, 4 x 100m medley.



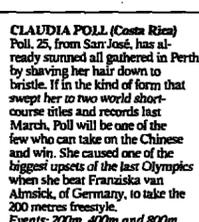
AGNES KOVACS (Hung)
Kovacs, 16 and from Budapest, is coached at the famous Spartacus club by László Kiss, who steered Kristina Egerváry to winning the same title, 200 metres backstroke, at three successive Olympics (her first aged 14). Her main rivals, Chinese apart, are Samantha Riley, the defending champion from Australia, and Penny Heyns, South Africa's first Olympic champion.
Events: 100 and 200 metres breaststroke, 4 x 100 metres medley.



AMY VAN DYKEN (US)
Van Dyken, 24, from Englewood, Colorado, is said to be a dollar millionaire after winning two individual and two relay gold medals at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. She says the most important riches she has gained are through her work with asthmatic children. Van Dyken says of her Chinese rivals: "You have to put all the drugs stuff to the back of your mind and beat them".
Events: 50m and 100m freestyle, 4 by 100m freestyle.



CLAUDIA POLL (Costa Rica)
Poll, 25, from San José, has already sunned all gathered in Perth by shaving her hair down to a buzz. If in the kind of form that swept her to two world short-course titles and records last March, Poll will be one of the few who can take on the Chinese and win. She caused one of the biggest upsets of the last Olympics when she beat Franziska van Almsick, of Germany, to take the 200 metres freestyle.
Events: 200m, 400m and 800m freestyle.



TENNIS: CONTRASTING QUARTER-FINAL EXITS FOR BRITAIN'S LEADING MEN

Henman finds consolation in manner of Qatar defeat

TWO British players, two quarter-finals, the same result, but two distinctly different outcomes. As Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski left the Qatar Open on Saturday night, there was a world of difference between them. Henman had a spring in his step as he headed for Sydney to defend his title, while Rusedski looked to have the worries of the world on his shoulders as he made for Melbourne and an exhibition tournament.

Both had been beaten in three sets by talented players, but Henman's 7-5, 4-6, 6-4 defeat by Petr Korda produced one of the best matches of the

week and brought the best out of the British No 2.

Korda has the physique of an under-nourished beanpole, but put the tennis ball away where near his backhand and he can generate enough power and speed to flatten the best, as Pete Sampras discovered in the US Open last year.

For a while, against Henman, Korda could do no wrong. The strength and depth of his groundstrokes kept Henman pinned to the back of the court and, with Henman unable to get his first service working, it looked to be all over at the start of the

second set. But, having saved three break points in the fourth game, Henman started to steer the flow of winners.

The forehand, an unreliable weapon in the past, began to find its range and his movement around the court showed evidence of hard work in the gym. Had his service been more consistent, the result could have been different, but it is early days yet and, in the first tournament of the year, the signs were promising.

"I can't have too many complaints and I can take away a lot of positives from this match," Henman said.

"The way I played from the baseline, the way I hit my passing shots — all these are things I've worked hard on. The serve is an area that has to improve, but it's just a mental thing of making sure you commit to the shot rather than worry about percentages. I know if I serve well, I can win matches."

With that, he was off to Sydney and a first-round appointment with Mark Woodford. He knows his ranking will suffer when the new list is issued today, but both he and his coach, David Felgate, seemed pleased with the week's work.

On the other hand, Rusedski had everything to gain at this event. With only one ranking point to defend, he could have got the season off to an impressive start, but, against Fabrice Santoro, he only did himself justice in the second set as he went out 6-2, 3-6, 6-3.

Santoro is not the easiest of opponents. He plays with style and guile and, having dismantled Rusedski, he went on to drive Goran Ivanisevic to distraction in the semi-finals, winning 6-1, 6-4.

Rusedski claimed that he was not worried by the result, but, while he said all the right things — "It was just one of those days", "I made too many unforced errors", "I can learn from this" — the look on his face told a different story. Rusedski appears to enjoy the kudos that goes with being in the top ten, but while getting there was hard enough, staying there carries with it a whole range of new pressures.

China close to World Cup finals expulsion

CHINA have narrowly avoided being thrown out of the women's World Cup finals in May after Robert Watson, the secretary of the International Hockey Federation's disciplinary panel, said that the actions of some of their team at the World Cup qualifying tournament in Harare last August amounted to the worst incident of aggression towards an umpire that the panel had dealt with (Cathy Harris writes).

"The next step would have been to ban the whole side from the international scene and that would have meant the World Cup in Holland," he said after the panel's meeting in London.

The incident occurred after China's group match against Scotland when Naomi Kato, the Japanese umpire, awarded a controversial penalty corner to the Scots ten minutes from the end. Rhona Simpson, harried in a shot that proved to be the winner, but, after the contest, two Chinese players, Yu Shu Zhen and Yang Hong Bing, confronted Kato, and their goalkeeper, Ding Hongping, threw an empty water bottle at a group of officials.

Watson said that the two outfield players concerned had both been suspended for two years from August 31, 1997, and that Ding Hongping had been suspended for one year from the same date. Li Xiao Sheng, the team manager, was also banned from taking charge of an international team for two years.

St Albans bow out at the first attempt

ST ALBANS, last year's winners, failed to survive the preliminary round of the national indoor club championship by finishing fourth in pool A at Kidderminster yesterday (Sydney Friskin writes).

In a tense finish, St Albans lost 9-6 to Teddington, who finished on top of the pool and were joined by Hull and Old Loughtonians for the finals at Crystal Palace on February 6.

East Grinstead took top position with maximum points in pool B at Cocks Moor Woods Leisure Centre, Birmingham, followed by Reading and Doncaster. The two Midlands challengers, Barford Tigers and Starport, fell by the wayside.

East Grinstead overcame a few availability problems and suffered a further casualty on Saturday with the loss of Peter Head with a calf injury. He will be out of action for several weeks. However, East Grinstead were compensated by the outstanding performance of Jeremy Boyse, who scored 22 goals in five matches.

Reading, who made the final stages for the first time, were below strength, with seven of their regular squad missing, including Mason, Ashdown, Whyatt, and Pearn, who are with the England squad in Sicily.

Santoro hands Korda title on plate

PETR KORDA ended his first week back at work after the Christmas break £85,000 richer and one title to the good when he won one of the simplest, if strangest, finals of his career (Alix Ramsay writes). He defeated Fabrice Santoro, of France, 6-0, 6-3 to win the Qatar Open for the second time.

To be more accurate, he kept his cool and allowed Santoro to throw it all away. In a one-hour match, Korda was only allowed to play serious tennis for 15 minutes as Santoro threw in the towel.

The umpire had not been good from the start. A mere five points into the match, Korda's service clipped the net cord and, in doing so, dislodged the centre tape from his moorings. After ten

minutes of scurrying to and fro, the man with the ATP hammer was found to carry out some running repairs and the match could continue.

A few minutes later, Santoro was in trouble when what he thought was a winning backhand was called out to give Korda break point. Deeply unhappy, Santoro duly lost his service and then hit the ball directly at the offending line judge, earning a code violation into the bargain.

At that point, Santoro had had enough. From 2-0 down, he won only three more points as Korda wrapped up the first set in just 17 minutes.

Only when he realised that the match would be over without him registering a single game did Santoro perk up and he broke Korda as the

Czech's concentration wavered slightly. In front of an enthusiastic crowd, there clearly lingered some pride and Santoro got stuck in to make a fight of it. There were flashes of the player who had put out two seeds — Greg Rusedski and Goran Ivanisevic — on Saturday as he began to take the sting out of Korda's ground strokes.

However, Korda was not about to let the diminutive Frenchman spoil the start of what could be his last season on the tour. Having overcome a string of injuries that have marred his career, he was determined to start the year on a high and, with one final backhand, the title was his, leaving him with little fine tuning left to do before the start of the Australian Open in seven days' time.

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FA Carling Premiership: Dutch winger's dazzling skills win bruising contest at Highbury

Overmars takes battle honours

Dalglish must get to grips with tale of the unexpected



ARSENAL 2 LEEDS UNITED 1

By Rob Hughes

FOR an ugly hour, George Graham's anti-football, his old team hacking it out with his new, depressed a premature spring Saturday at Highbury. Then Marc Overmars came in from the wing to strike two match-winning goals of classic delight and restore the theory that art is the boot applied to ball, not man.

A week earlier, Overmars was the butt of vitriolic Arsenal dressing-room accusation that he lacked commitment during the anaemic FA Cup draw with Port Vale. Arsène Wenger, the manager trying to remould what Graham ingrained at Arsenal, said: "There is no special animosity between him [Graham] and me. I would like to do as well as he did. It was of course a very physical battle. They came to frustrate us and we had our tails up. When every ball is a fight, sometimes you forget to play. I am pleased Overmars showed his type can still make the difference. Like many great players, you sometimes look for more than they produce."

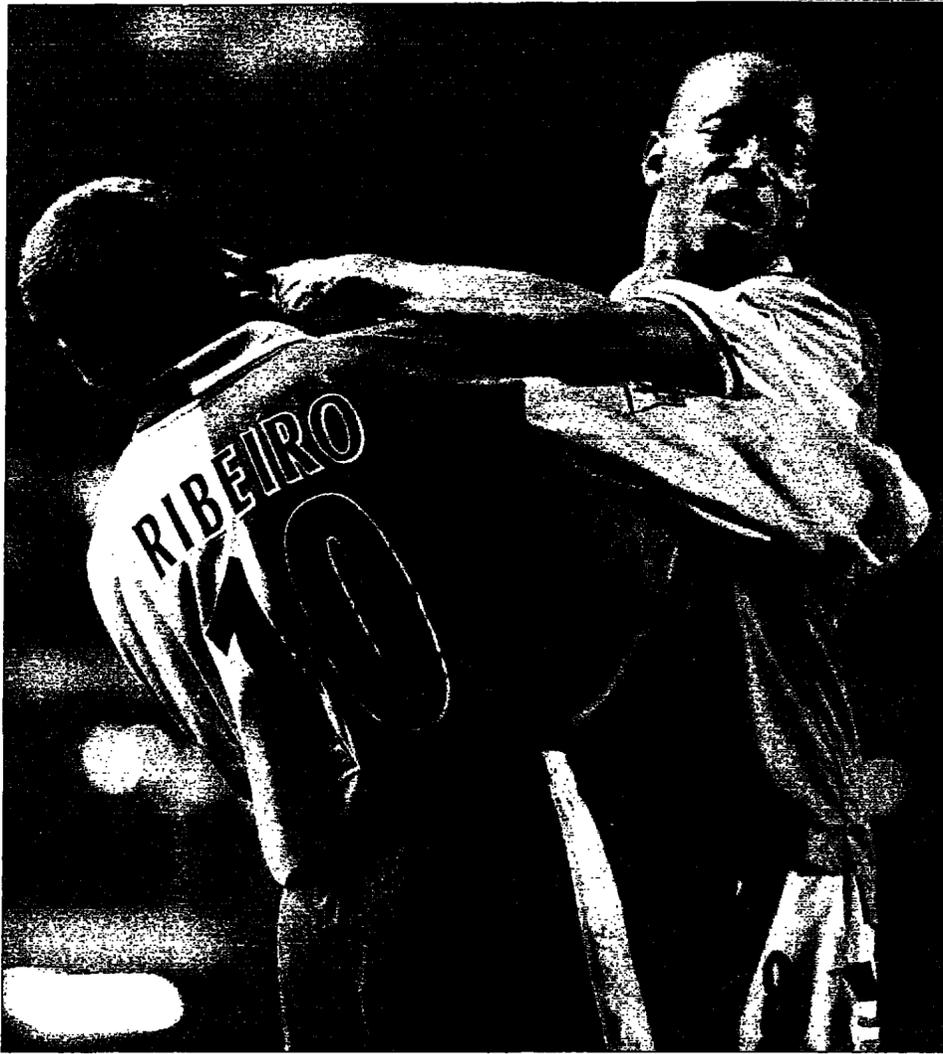
"We see with Dennis Bergkamp how referees will not protect quality players, they allow them to be man-marked in a very physical way, yet today Dennis was accused twice by the referee of cheating [by diving]. Maybe referees feel he wants to dictate their whistle. Some foreign players think what happens here is not real football, but either you adapt or you go away."

Graham did not much demur from Wenger's theme. "I was quite happy getting deep into the second half 0-0," he said. "With the quality players Arsenal have got, I expected them to be up challenging Manchester United. I wanted Overmars, but couldn't afford him when I was at Arsenal and Leeds have no chance of the big-money players. I can get a few foreign buys and bring through some outstanding kids — you saw Alan Maybury and Harry Kewell today and I've another four ready to step in."

Maybury kept Overmars peripheral until the sixtieth minute, when the Dutchman darted to the inside right position and, released by Bergkamp's perceptive pass, beat Nigel Martyn with power from 23 yards. After 72 minutes, similarly placed, Overmars advanced cheekily to drive the ball, again right-footed, through Martyn's legs.

In between, Leeds broke to equalise. Bruno Ribeiro shaped the move for Rod Wallace to sprint behind Lee Dixon. David Seaman, neither as busy nor as impressive as Martyn on the day, merely deflected the cross to Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink, who scored easily.

All else was denial. Bergkamp began brightly but lost appetite



Wright and Ribeiro, the Leeds midfielder, clash during the ill-tempered Premiership match in North London

after Radebe's boot caught his shin. Wright fluctuated between high desire and moodiness and Gerald Ashby, the referee, seemed too distant, too disinterested to arrest foul play. He booked Halle for obstruction and Maybury for kicking the ball away, but turned his back on Kelly brawling with Petit and Wright feuding with Ribeiro and Wetherall.

It is players who endanger the livelihoods of others, but, unpooled, they got away with a broken toe for Haaland, a bruised achilles for Keown and some stitches into the eyebrow of Petit. On the sidelines, impatient to return after testing his damaged ankle in a Mediterranean clinic, Tony Adams

reassured Glenn Hoddle, the England coach, that he is ready to resume training and not retire, as was feared.

Hoddle may be comforted, or wryly amused, to hear a Frenchman using England's World Cup cause as persuasion for Adams to play, Wright to stay. "It depends on your priority in life," Wenger said. "To make £2 million, or to achieve your goal of a World Cup. Money must always be the consequence of your performance and if Ian Wright should go anywhere, it should not be Benfica if he wants to play for England."

Referring to the inducement, variously reported as £2 million and £6 million over 3½ years, for

the 34-year-old Wright to break his contract and join Graeme Souness in Lisbon, Wenger added: "I don't want to kill Ian's future, but it would be irresponsible to let him go. I told his agent 'no' and I tell Ian if he battles like today he will go to the World Cup."

Poor Wright. He senses that Wenger is searching for a replacement, he manages to look and sound like a creature in captivity. "I can't lie," Wright admitted, "I would have loved to have gone to Benfica. But the door's been closed, what can I do?" Short of run for his £20,000 a week, short of relish his partnership with Bergkamp and his pin money from British Telecom and Nike, short of a chat

show with LWT and short of knocking down to chase a World Cup dream, there is not a lot to console the lad.

When the sun lowered over Highbury's West Stand, Wright's name echoed where he heard only boos weeks ago. He turned before leaving the field and waved. "A gesture of 'thank you and good-night,'" suggested an onlooker. "Good-night," Wenger replied, "is not goodbye."

ARSENAL (4-4-2): D. Seaman — L. Dixon, M. Keown, S. Boult, N. Wretford — R. Parloer, P. Verbeke, E. Peart, M. Overmars — I. Wright, D. Bergkamp. LEEDS UNITED (5-4-1): N. Martyn — A. Maybury, D. Wetherall, L. Radebe, A. Haaland (sub: R. McKenzie, 21min), G. Helle — G. Kelly, L. Bowyer (sub: J.F. Haselbaink, 52), B. Ribeiro, H. Kewell — R. Wallace (sub: D. Liley, 80). Referee: G. Ashby

READ any book about Kenny Dalglish and marvel at his success; select any cutting and wonder at the glowing headlines and purple prose; talk to anybody who claims to know him and absorb the unstinting praise. It is unlikely that the topic "Relegation battles I have endured" will be mentioned. It is not a subject with which Dalglish is familiar.

Until now, that is; until Newcastle United's disorganised and disheartening display against Sheffield Wednesday on Saturday. The narrow margin of defeat only masked the obvious — Newcastle are in freefall — and there appears little that Dalglish, the manager, can draw on to arrest the slide. He is not qualified.

Dalglish, as player or coach, has never pined his trade amid the murky depths of the FA Carling Premiership, in which men turn grey and young players grow old. It is a nether world of fear and fright, in which the most skilful freeze and the eternally hopeful give up.

Newcastle lie four points away from the drop zone, having lost four successive league matches and not won in eight. The title contenders of barely a month ago are drifting down among the dead-wood, sucked deeper into the whirlpool on a wave of instability, insecurity and ineptitude.

Mitigating circumstances abound. Alan Shearer and Faustino Asprilla, £22.5 million-worth of strikepower, were still injured. David Batty and Philippe Albert were suspended and Alessandro Pistone, Stuart Pearce and Steve Howey were absent, too.

Yet, while Newcastle's attacking limitations have long been recognised, their defence had proved relatively sound — until Saturday. It was turned, twisted and tormented every which way by the balletic gyrations of Carbone, Di Canio and Rudi. At times, it was embarrassing.

So, too, was Dalglish's press conference. It lasted no more than three minutes, held nothing of value and much of it was incomprehensible, anyway.

"No, I'm not looking over my shoulder," he replied to the brave soul who ventured the word "relegation". "I'm only looking forward to the next game." However, to submit that Newcastle lost the match only because "we shot ourselves in the foot twice" and "brought it upon ourselves" was an insult to the intelligence of those who witnessed it.

His side was well beaten. Di Canio lashed in Carbone's cross after 50 seconds and although Tomasson equalised fortuitously, after Pressman had saved but not

held his initial effort; 'New' some prodded in the decider in the 51st minute.

Sure, errors by Watson and Hamilton led to the Wednesday goals, but Di Canio squandered umpteen chances.

Ron Atkinson, the Wednesday manager, indulged in his usual hyperbole, much of it similarly vacuous to Dalglish but at least it was audible. "Absolutely brilliant," he gushed. "There won't have been a better performance than that anywhere in the country today."

Wednesday were vibrant, frequently excellent. Since Atkinson took charge two months ago, Wednesday have risen from nineteenth place in the Premiership to twelfth. Mr Bojangles rules, OK?

In contrast, Mr Glum gets glummer. Few would pretend to be close to Dalglish: a thesis could be



SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY 2 NEWCASTLE UNITED 1

By Russell Kempson



Dalglish: unfamiliar position

written on his innermost thoughts and he would still appear unfathomable. Externally, though, the warning signs are clear. The bowed head, the hang-dog expression; the eyes that gaze into space, the nervous shifting of the body.

And when it gets too much, he departs — as he did at Liverpool. Inexplicably, and Blackburn Rovers, when he moved briefly "upstairs". A year at St James' Park, 12 months of honest yet fruitless endeavour in a hotbed of expectation and the signs are back.

Shearer could return against Stevenage Borough on January 25, or soon thereafter, and perhaps all will be well in Geordieland. If not, Dalglish must take a crash-course in fighting, battling and scrapping. Or maybe he won't hang around to find out.

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY (4-4-2): F. Pressman — I. Nolan, D. Walker, J. Newsome, M. Merrington — N. Alexander, G. Hether (sub: D. Humphries, 80min), P. Atherton, P. Addy — G. Carbone, P. Di Canio (sub: A. Booth, 69). NEWCASTLE UNITED (4-4-2): S. Hirstop — W. Barton (sub: J. Wallace, 89), D. Peacock, S. Watson, A. Hughes — F. Galasso, R. Lee, D. Hamilton (sub: J. Bunn, 78), J. Beardsley — J. D. Tomasson, J. Barnes. Referee: D. Elbery

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Evans leads chorus with Redknapp back on song

LEYTON Orient had just been outplayed in front of not very many people at Dean Court, Bournemouth, and Frank Clark, their manager, pinned against a wall under the main stand, was trying to explain it. "Redknapp was the difference today," he said. "He controlled the game, never gave the ball away, he was a class apart. We had nobody to match him." Jamie Redknapp was just 17 at the time.

It is fair to assume, therefore, that Clark would have enjoyed being at Anfield on Saturday. Every manager likes to be proved a good judge of player. It's a matter of professional pride, and here was Redknapp, now 24, blossoming into the player that Clark believed he was destined to be. Controlling the game, not giving the ball away, a class apart.

True, it did not take a genius to recognise that the young Redknapp was going to be good. Harry Redknapp, his father and a famed spotter of footballing talent, was eulogising his son's ability from his early teens. Tottenham Hotspur and Terry Venables were truly aggrieved when Redknapp Jr, having come through their schoolboy ranks, opted to sign YTS forms with Bournemouth instead, where Redknapp Sr was manager. Liverpool signed him after just 15 games for the South Coast club.

Kenny Dalglish all but bit Bournemouth's hands off. He made an impression on Merseyside, too, and for England but then injuries took their toll. Hamstring, ankle ligaments, broken ankle, lots of time off and doubts about whether that huge potential would be fulfilled. On Satur-



LIVERPOOL 2 WIMBLEDON 0

By Peter Robinson

day, Redknapp dismissed them, scoring both goals and earning more praise.

"If you look at his percentages today, the number of passes that have reached their target, I would say he was in the middle-nineties, which is fantastic, exceptional," Roy Evans, the Liverpool manager, said. "He looks to me to be back to his best and the goals were the icing on the cake."

And, if Anfield had to wait for those goals, at least they were worth it. Seventy minutes of sterile nonsense were forgotten when Evans brought Berger on and switched



Redknapp: double strike

McManaman from right wing to left. Ardley, McManaman's marker for the day, suddenly looked shattered and the Liverpool man was free to set up Redknapp for his first, a low shot that went in via the goalkeeper's hand and a post.

Six minutes from the end and a mis-hit Berger clearance sent McManaman sprinting away again, for fully 50 yards. From his cross, Owen set up Redknapp for a swifter from outside the penalty area that found the top corner. He celebrated with a touchline hug for the club physio, Mark Leather, who predicted at half-time that he would score two before the end, the shrewd one.

It was a good job that Redknapp did score those goals, though, for this was a day when Owen and Fowler, prodigies both, drew blanks. It was a good job, too, that Wimbledon were so supine. Joe Kinnear, their manager, repeated his mantra about injuries, about not having any strikers, about playing in a different league to Liverpool (or any big club) and it seemed as though his players were starting to believe him.

But then, as Redknapp held court, head up, ball always under control, passing crisply short and long, embarrassing Earle and Jones and overshadowing Ince, it was possible to see why. He and McManaman showed, if nothing else, that not all the country's best players wear the red of Manchester United.

LIVERPOOL (2-4-2): D. James — J. McMan, G. Hargreaves, P. Babb, S. Hargreaves — S. McManaman, J. Redknapp, P. Ince, D. Leongardson (sub: P. Sanger, 71min) — R. Owen, H. O'Grady. WIMBLEDON (4-4-2): N. Sullivan — K. Cunningham, S. Fony, D. Blackwell, A. Kimble — M. Hughes, R. Elzie, V. Jones, N. Riley — G. Cort (sub: C. Ludlow, 55), M. Gray (sub: A. Clarke, 75). Referee: M. Bodenham

Abou gives Barnsley a lesson in any language

DANNY WILSON described this as "arguably our worst performance of the season", by which logic Brighton are possibly playing their home matches at a stadium not hugely convenient to their supporters, Manchester United are conceivably top of the FA Carling Premiership and Wilson's own Barnsley team are notionally at the bottom. There they will stay — inconceivably, indisputably, indubitably and irrefragably — while they continue to play like this.

They have been beaten heavily before, of course, the six goals that West Ham United thrashed past them at Upton Park on Saturday adding to the half-dozen that Chelsea plundered at Oakwell, the five they shipped at Highbury and the seven that the champions themselves managed at Old Trafford.

Barnsley have now conceded 57 goals in 22 Premiership outings, 37 in 12 away from home. It must be said that they can, on occasions, look pretty awful and out of their depth. But they can never, surely, have played so spinelessly since that day in April when they secured promotion from the Nationwide League. Or maybe even before.

"If we put in displays like that, we will prove the pundits right and we will get relegated," Wilson said. "Any defeat that size is embarrassing, but we didn't have any fight, any spirit, which has been our forte."

Berkovic dictated the pattern of play, but we just didn't stay with their runners and if you give players of that ability that much room, you are in trouble." Wilson did not reveal who



WEST HAM UNITED 6 BARNSELY 0

By Keith Pike

he had detailed to shadow Berkovic and it must be assumed that it was one of two players he hauled off after just 31 minutes, by which time West Ham were 2-0 up and counting their win bonuses. The substitutions, and the change in formation from 3-5-2 to 4-4-2, made no difference.

Lampard got the first goal with just five minutes gone, left unmarked to head in Unsworth's cross, and the mighty impressive Sarrazini, Abou, cleverly released by Hartson, made it 2-0 when, comically, two defenders de-



Wilson: rues lack of spirit

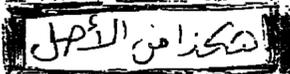
cid to tackle themselves instead. It got worse.

Goal No 3: Abou, after a move the length of the field and a one-two with Hartson deep in unmarked territory (the Barnsley box). No 4: Moncur, after another flowing attack and more "after you, Sammy old boy" defending; No 5: Abou's backheel; Hartson's swivel and shot (defenders spotted at burger bar analysing goal No 2); No 6: Hartson's reverse pass; Lazaridis's thumping finish past the entirely blameless Watson (defenders work out what went wrong with goal No 2. Only four more to go).

An interesting chap, Abou. "My French is about as good as my English, so communication is a bit of a problem," Harry Redknapp, the West Ham manager, said. "At training, when he arrived, I told him to go to the back post for corners. We took five and he still wasn't there."

Redknapp hoped that the mauling "doesn't knock" Barnsley back too far. Wilson, he said, had done "a fantastic job" and reports from their three previous matches, all undefeated, had suggested West Ham "were in for a rough old afternoon". Following the same logic, one press-box optimist had even tipped Barnsley to win and was left feeling a mite sheepish. Still, the grass tasted nice and I'm getting my coat sheared in the morning.

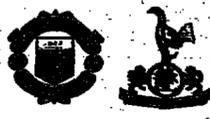
WEST HAM UNITED (3-5-1-2): C. Forster — I. Pearce, R. Ferdinand, D. Unsworth — S. Potts — A. Lampy (sub: J. Moncur, 31min); F. Lampard, S. Lazaridis — E. Berkovic (sub: P. Alves, 78) — S. Abou, J. Hartson. BARNSELY (3-5-2): D. Watson — C. Moncur, M. Aspinby (sub: P. Markwell, 31), A. Krizan (sub: C. Marcollo, 31) — N. Eadon, N. Reddham, E. Tricker, D. Sheehan, D. Barnett — A. Ward, G. Hirstop (sub: J. Hendrie, 74). Referee: N. Barry



FA Carling Premiership: Satisfied supporters sit back and enjoy as Spurs fall into dire straits

United prove too much to stand even in second gear

They said it would be hard for Manchester United after the FA Cup demolition of Chelsea at Stamford Bridge last weekend, but Saturday life at Old Trafford hit new heights of perfection. After a season of trying and all sorts agonising along the way, they finally persuaded their supporters to sit down.



MANCHESTER UNITED 2 TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR 0 By Oliver Holt

Southampton and Coventry City showing signs of fight.

The first half had the air of a practice match. United should have taken the lead in the second minute, when Sheringham freed Giggs on the left and he cut the ball back into the path of Cole, who, stretching, struck the ball cleanly. However, Baardsen instinctively pushed out his left foot and deflected the shot over the crossbar.

Giggs and Cole had other efforts that narrowly failed to hit the target and, with United snuffering, Spurs even had the audacity to fashion a chance for themselves, Fox playing in Dominguez, who shot wastefully wide with only Schmeichel to beat.

A minute before half-time, United went ahead. Cole rode two tackles and played the ball wide to Beckham on the right. He wrapped his foot round the ball and curled it deep to the back post, where Baardsen came to try to claim it but dropped it under a challenge from Sheringham. It bounced once and Giggs lashed it into the roof of the net from 20 yards out.

Midway through the second half, with the pace and energy of Giggs, the game's outstanding feature, United took advantage of Spurs' inability to overcome the stifling pressing of Beckham, Giggs, Sheringham and Scholes.

Beckham played the ball wide to Beckham again, he crossed deep again and this time Giggs tricked Vega, peeled away from him and nodded the ball across Baardsen and into the corner of the net.

Berti, their new signing from Internazionale, was anonymous on his debut. Klinsmann was isolated by the over-elaboration of Dominguez and the lack of service from a backward-looking midfield.

"We are in big, big trouble now," the German striker said. "What we have to work on is movement off the ball. That was the big difference between the teams today."

Manchester United (4-3-3): P Schmeichel; G Healy, S Johnson, G Pallister, D Webb, D Beckham, P Scholes, R Giggs, E Sheringham, A Cole, D G. Baardsen.

Tottenham Hotspur (4-4-2): E Baardsen; S Carr, R Vega, S Campbell, C Wilson, R Fox, C Chedoke, N Bart, S. Clarence (sub: A. Skirton, S. J. Donaghy, J. Klinsmann). Referee: P. Alcock.



Le Saux, the architect of two Chelsea goals, salutes the applause for his creativity. Photographs: David Cannon / Allsport

Gullit conjures another permutation

A TRUE champion can play badly and win, so we are told, and followers of that particular football philosophy were clad in Chelsea blue on Saturday. It does, though, skirt around the issue of why Ruud Gullit's side played poorly against a Coventry City team that never appeared to appreciate that this game was there for the taking.

Gordon Strachan confessed candidly that this was probably down to his second-half substitution of a debutant striker for an experienced midfielder player; irrational, and, as it turned out, suicidal thinking by a side one goal up away from home against one of the leaders in the FA Carling Premiership.

"I didn't want," the manager said, "to be hanging on for victory. We wanted to be brave. When we were 1-0 up, we wanted to go for two. Maybe, with hindsight, we could have sat back, but who knows, then we might have lost 6-1." One seriously doubts it.

In fact, the game turned entirely on substitutions. Until the appearance of Mark Nicholls for the second half, and Gullit soon after, Chelsea appeared incapable of shaking off the effects of playing extra time in the Coca-Cola Cup victory over Ipswich Town days previously.

Several players also were still suffering from flu - at least one hopes that the likes of Di Matteo, Wise, Hughes and, in particular, Zola were, because their performances were remarkably subdued as they fell behind to Paul Tierler's thirtieth-minute goal. Granville, hopelessly misjudged Salako's

cross from the left in the sixtieth and 65th minutes for Nicholls to head, and then superbly volley, past Hedman.

That finishing was of the highest calibre, particularly for a 20-year-old who had scored just one senior goal in his career. As Gullit explained, Nicholls makes up for his lack of experience with self-belief. "His strength is that he thinks he is the best player in the world," the manager said. "I like players who have that confidence. He is a young player around lots of experienced internationals, but he is not shy. He is willing to speak his mind. Maybe there are better players who do not have that mentality and that is why they are never going to make it. If you have that confidence, it does not matter where you go or what you do. He could go to the San Siro tomorrow and do the same thing."

Di Matteo finished off the scoring in the 78th minute, set up by Nicholls with a neat dummy by Hughes. It was, by the end, a comprehensive victory, but not one in which Chelsea could take much pride. Gullit claimed Wise was lucky not to have had his legs broken by a robust challenge from Williams. Mike Reed, the referee, did not deem the tackle worthy of a free kick, but he did maintain his average this season of booking five players. His pedantry was the only consistency of the day.

Chelsea (4-4-2): E. van Goy; S. Clarke, M. Duberry, F. Lillo, D. Granville (sub: M. Nicholls, 45min); D. Wise, R. di Matteo, B. Lortie, G. Le Saux; G. Zola (sub: R. Gullit, 60), M. Hughes.

Coventry City (4-4-2): M. Hedman, R. Shaw, P. Williams, G. Berti, D. Burrows; J. Tierler, M. Bolland, N. Wright, J. Salako (sub: V. Molkov, 58); D. Doolan, D. Hughton. Referee: P. Reed.

ment for the Frenchman strode purposefully about mid-field. Le Saux was similarly busy, but his industry only paid off after Gullit had swapped a back four to three at half-time to stretch the notable exceptions of Lambourde and Le Saux apart, they lacked any conviction.

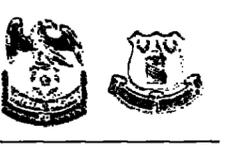
Lambourde was making his first Premiership start since he was sent off at Liverpool last October. If Gullit believed that his £1.6 million signing from Bordeaux would respond well to a protracted spell on the sidelines, it proved to be astute man-management

Coventry down the flank. The presence alone of Gullit in an attacking role, replacing Zola, appeared to terrify the visiting defence - even though the Dutchman, by his own admission, is hopelessly unfit.

His runs helped to create the space for the goals that came in rapid succession, the first two almost identical as Le Saux

Nicholls, the substitute, shows great aplomb for a 20-year-old as he scores his second goal within five minutes for Chelsea

Palace in dire need of home comfort



CRYSTAL PALACE 1 EVERTON 3 By Michael Henderson

EVEN though the great day is two years off, it's touch and go. When the Millennium is upon us and Tony Blair invites Sir Michael Mouse and Lord Duck of Burbank to open the glorious Dome in Greenwich, will Crystal Palace have won a home game?

At the halfway stage of a season that still has the capacity to go sour, they have now failed to win one of their ten Premiership matches at Selhurst Park and, if they continue to defend as poorly as they did against Everton, they will struggle to win one of the remaining nine. However short of players they are, this was a awful performance.

In fact, it was a poor match, the kind that makes one wonder why, with all the money sloshing around, there are so few teams of real quality in this country. When Miljan Miljanic, the Yugoslav coach, referred two decades ago to England's "industrial football", this is what he had in mind, except that it might be more truthful to call it post-industrial, for the workers have achieved a financial liberation beyond their wildest dreams.

Last week, Andy Hinchcliffe, the Everton left back, was supposed to go to Tottenham Hotspur for £3 million. He would get a supplementary loyalty bonus of half-a-million snappers for not asking to leave (don't snoop) and be paid £12,000 a week for the next three years. Hinchcliffe is a serviceable player, no more. It's a good job Ray Wilson is not around today, otherwise the noughts would roll on for ever.

That is too often the way of it with modern footballers. Clubs move heaven and earth to buy them and then discover that most can't even control a moving ball, or, in the case of Barnaby, of Everton, that they can't put it in the other team's goal. As Tommy Docherty has observed: "Most of these players trap the ball further than I could kick it."

It is not unreasonable, surely, to expect professionals to perform with greater expertise than amateurs. It

Charlton in charge 30 Aberdeen fall short 31

follows that players in the Premiership should, on the whole, perform more expertly than those in the lower divisions and, sitting at the top of this professional tier, the internationals should set exemplary standards. Why else are they paid so extravagantly?

One could say, if one felt generous, that Ferguson's feat, which allowed Short's pass to reach Barnaby, who thereby opened the scoring in the third minute, was clever. Up to a point it was, though the marking that enabled Barnaby to shoot his first league goal of the season was of schoolboy standard. It looked as though because the defending was so bad.

There are those who would commend Ferguson's header from a Thomas cross nine minutes later. But when a player has as much time to steady himself, as Thomas had, and as much room as Ferguson had to do something he practises all week on the training ground, it was not exactly an impossible task.

Perhaps there are some who feel that Madar's sweeping-in of Grant's pass on 33 minutes, after Dyer had retrieved a goal for Palace from the penalty spot, was a smart piece of coaching. Again, the marking was so loose that the defenders must have thought the Frenchman had brought some contagious disease with him across the Channel.

Madar, making his first appearance for Everton, had a competent game alongside Ferguson, though the thunderous ovation he received when he left the field suggested a natty wing three-quarter had just raced half the length of the pitch to touch down between the posts. It goes to show, in these trying times for the club, that Everton fans will cheer anything. A Barnaby goal, too! Send for the oxygen.

The Palace supporters, alas, did not have even that compensation. Brodin, the Swede, did them a turn by playing at the end of his first week on trial, and sent a header against the post before, understandably, he ran out of puff. Dyer looked busy in a brusque sort of way, but there is little finesse in this team and their situation is becoming desperate.

BOLTON WANDERERS (4-4-2): K. Bennett; N. Cox, A. Todd, G. Bergman, J. Phillips; J. Pollock (sub: F. Cox, 74min), P. Francis, A. Thompson, S. Sellers (sub: A. Gurnis, 60); M. Bala, R. Taylor. SOUTHAMPTON (4-3-3): P. Jones; J. Dodd, K. Hordale, R. Dwyer, F. Barwell; M. O'Leary, K. Richardson, G. Palmer; K. Davies, D. Hunt (sub: R. Slade, 48), E. Oosterwijk (sub: A. Williams, 71). Referee: G. Barber.

Barnsley language

Little's favourite substitute beginning to get itchy feet

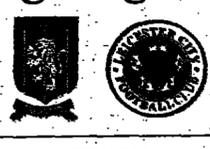
IT WAS not so long ago that Julian Joachim was considered the brightest young striker in England, a better prospect even than the precocious Robbie Fowler. While the potential of his teenage years may yet be realised, Joachim is drifting towards the conclusion it will not happen at Aston Villa.

Colleagues and opponents were united in their praise after Joachim's late goal on Saturday had brought Villa a point that they hardly merited from a performance bereft of imagination. "The best finisher I have seen at Leicester City," Emile Heskey, an apprentice when Joachim was at Hilbert Street, said. "An unexploded missile waiting to go off," Simon Grayson, who followed Joachim's path from Leicester to Villa, added vividly.

The only person less than sanguine was Brian Little. Unfortunately for Joachim, Little is the Villa manager. "I do not feel I have to think about picking teams at this moment," Little replied to the suggestion that Joachim's record as a substitute demands elevation.

Nine of his 11 appearances in the FA Carling Premiership this season have been from the bench, yet his tally of four goals matches Collymore and Yorke and is one more than Milosevic. "In my own mind, I feel I deserve to start," Joachim said. "I know I am fourth-choice and my chance might not come here. It is frustrating when I watch Match of the Day and see the likes of Fowler scoring so many goals when I was bracketed alongside him. I might have to look somewhere else."

Looking elsewhere became a tempting proposition on Saturday. The fact that Staunton was not only Villa's best defender, but invariably their most creative player as well, speaks volumes for the absence of flair in midfield. The sulking



ASTON VILLA 1 LEICESTER CITY 1 By Richard Hobson

Milosevic was booked for kicking the ball into an advertising board having conceded a free kick, and deserved to be taken off after being caught offside because he trudged back so slowly and petulantly when another decision went against him.

Such behaviour would be unthinkable from a Leicester player. Whatever their shortcomings, Leicester have a firm grasp of the team ethic. Egos are swiftly squashed. Izet has become one of the busiest of midfield players while Elliott is a commanding central defender of the old school.

They have, however, accrued just

three points from their past six matches and acquired a worrying habit of conceding late goals. "I honestly think our performances have been all right, though I might be the only person in Britain who thinks that," Martin O'Neill, the manager, said. "In terms of points, we are well up on the same stage last season, so you could say we are making progress."

The mistake on Saturday was to become over-cautious once Parker had given them the lead in the 53rd minute, converting a penalty after Schmeichel clustered into Izet when he should have held his ground. With four minutes remaining, Joachim, ghosting in from the right flank, glanced a cross by Collymore into the far corner.

Belatedly, Leicester remembered how to attack and Savage, another perceptive acquisition from the lower divisions, prompted the best save of the match from Bosnich with a firm, downward header. They remain a place above their Midlands rivals. In terms of spirit, the gap is manifestly wider.

Little bemoaned the decision of Mike Riley, the referee, to disallow a "goal" by Jan Taylor in the 23rd minute because of pushing at a corner and his refusal to introduce Lee Hendrie is mystifying.

At least, he could take consolation from the second-half performance of Collymore, who ran at defenders in the fashion of his most successful days at Nottingham Forest. Although the end product was negligible, it created a sense of excitement in the stands and, on an afternoon on which there was precious little else to cheer, such a contribution was most welcome.

Aston Villa (4-4-2): M. Bosnich; U. Ebiogu, S. Staunton, R. Edwards; F. Nelson (sub: J. Jordan, 57min), M. Dunne, J. Taylor, S. Grayson. A. Wright; S. Collymore, S. Milosevic. LEICESTER CITY (3-5-2): K. Keller; P. Karmali, M. Elliott, S. Walsh; R. Savage, N. Lennon, G. Parker, M. Izet, S. Guppy; E. Heskey, J. Marshall (sub: A. Collins, 72). Referee: M. Riley.

Jones angers Le Tissier by leaving him on the bench

AS Andy Williams, the Southampton substitute, entered late into this game to audible groans from his own supporters, the temptation to offer a quiet reminder of I Can't Get Used to Losing You was just too much.

The disappointment of the visiting fans was not a comment on Williams's ability, but an expression of dismay that Matt Le Tissier, relegated to the bench, would not even get ten minutes against Bolton Wanderers.

On a signpost on the outskirts of Southampton, someone has scrawled "God's Country". It is a reference to their deity, the man whom his many admirers in the city refer to on the back of their football shirts as Le Dieu.

It was against this backdrop that David Jones, the Southampton manager, expressed his frustration after his side's hard-earned draw. They had scrapped courageously through much of the game with ten men, after the tenth dismissal of Francis Benali's career, and yet the talk was still of Le Tis.

"It's crazy, every time Le Tissier is missing, everyone seems to think it is a massive problem," Jones said. "There is this tremendous controversy built up around him, but the simple fact is that I felt he had been going through a lean spell, so I wanted to change it. I haven't got a problem with him and, as far as I know, he hasn't got a problem with me."

Wrong. Le Tissier has got a big problem with Jones for dropping him and with the world in general for being, well, generally unkind. A year ago, his form took him back into the England squad, earning gushing praise from Glenn Hoddle. The subsequent criticism appears to have been too much for an introspective, sensitive soul.

shame. This match required a Le Tissier, or even a Beardsley, anyone to inject a modicum of intelligence to honest endeavour.

In Jones's defence, his side looked the more assured until Benali's dismissal for raising an arm to the provocative Pollock, an action described by Jones as "stupid, crazy, he had to go". From then, it was a question of whether they, and in particular Jones, their excellent goalkeeper, could hold out.

Bolton's presentable opportunities probably reached double figures. Taylor, the loan signing from West Bromwich Albion, missing the three best, Thompson hitting a post and Jones making three improbable saves.

One feels a certain amount of sympathy for Taylor, who was straggling along in Albion's reserves a week or two ago, but Bolton's failing all season has been a distinct lack of goals and it was perhaps a little ambitious, or naive, to expect him to make the considerable leap the Premiership demands. "There is no need to panic, there is still plenty of time to get out of this," Colin Todd, the Bolton manager, said. That may be a little optimistic.

Of the two teams, Southampton look the more likely to survive in the Premiership. It is a desperately depressing scenario, but it appears increasingly likely that last season's three promoted teams are heading straight back down again. Raised up to be knocked down again, now that is something Le Tissier knows all about.

BOLTON WANDERERS (4-4-2): K. Bennett; N. Cox, A. Todd, G. Bergman, J. Phillips; J. Pollock (sub: F. Cox, 74min), P. Francis, A. Thompson, S. Sellers (sub: A. Gurnis, 60); M. Bala, R. Taylor. SOUTHAMPTON (4-3-3): P. Jones; J. Dodd, K. Hordale, R. Dwyer, F. Barwell; M. O'Leary, K. Richardson, G. Palmer; K. Davies, D. Hunt (sub: R. Slade, 48), E. Oosterwijk (sub: A. Williams, 71). Referee: G. Barber.

was terse. "What do you think?" said, sitting alone on the Southampton bus waiting for the rest of his team-mates to emerge from the players' lounge. "I was fit and available to play, but I'd rather not say anything else - I think you know the reasons."

Le Tissier is a victim of the expectation generated by his own talent. Ordinary players are allowed weeks of indifference, but not match-winners. They are placed on pedestals of pagan worship that have rickety foundations, susceptible to any change in the breeze of popular opinion. It is a

Le Tissier, the substitute, shows great aplomb for a 20-year-old as he scores his second goal within five minutes for Chelsea



Le Tissier: slumped on pedestal



Joachim: feeling frustrated

FOOTBALL: MILLER'S PREMONITION REALISED IN DEFEAT BY RESILIENT RANGERS

Aberdeen unable to question authority of champions

REMINISCENCE can sometimes double as prophecy. Last week, Alex Miller was recalling how he had seen players' mental condition decline in the days before an away match with Rangers until they were in no state to compete. The words turned out to have been a premonition of his Aberdeen side's display at Ibrox on Saturday. The full-time score of 2-0 to Rangers, which extended the club's lead in the Bell's Scottish League premier division to three points, was in place by the twelfth minute.

That short period even encompassed a little carelessness by the champions, who delayed taking the lead when Gordon Durie headed against a post after eight minutes. Miller only became manager of Aberdeen in November and is in that period of grace when a newcomer can disguise a performance without feeling wholly accountable for it. The team is largely composed of men signed by his predecessors.

If Aberdeen are to escape their pitiful condition, few can be allowed to remain. Rangers spent the afternoon setting matters to rights and the visitors hardly dared to interrupt them. The champions had to demonstrate that their inept

display in losing to Celtic ten days ago was an aberration rather than a precursor of ruin.

Some individuals, too, were intent on clearing up a misunderstanding. This has been the poorest of Brian Laudrup's four seasons with Rangers and some deduced that he had switched off his engine so that he could coast downhill to the end of his contract. It is commonly supposed that he will retire, perhaps to Ajax, in the summer.

The Rangers forward's mind, however, might not be a muddle of contractual issues after all. Perhaps his diminished form had only been the consequence of illness and injury in previous months. So far as Aberdeen were concerned, he was dismayingly alert on Saturday, notching the second goal with a 20-yard shot, after Sergio Porrini had opened the scoring, and amusing himself as much as he delighted the crowd.

The other outstanding piece of business, subsequent to the defeat at Celtic Park, was also attended to by Rangers. Paul Gascoigne had mimed the playing of a flute while he warmed up in front of supporters at the Old Firm game. The gesture is an allusion to Orange walks and in Glasgow, with its sectarian divisions, is liable to be provocative.

Gascoigne, who has been ill with flu, was an unused substitute against Aberdeen and, after the victory he entered the press room to read out an apology for his conduct at Celtic Park. He stated that Rangers had fined him £20,000, which will be given to charity.

As usual, he is guilty of folly rather than malevolence. The flouting was apparently carried out at the request of Rangers supporters who were within earshot of Gascoigne and, thoughtlessly intent on pleasing his admirers, he performed it for a moment.

On Saturday, Gascoigne must have spent the afternoon contemplating the statement that he would have to make later. Rangers did not require the player to express himself on the pitch, for his place there was being filled admirably by Barry Ferguson, a teenager who uses the ball with accuracy and discrimination. Ibrox is crowded with men capable of damaging a side as vulnerable as Aberdeen.

Miller had seen the team win its past two games, but climbing out of the relegation zone is its only realistic ambition at present. Consideration of Aberdeen usually involves maulings about the great Alex Ferguson era of the early Eighties, but the decline has steepened in recent times. Under Alex Smith, Aberdeen won the Skol Cup in 1989, the Tennent's Scottish Cup in 1990 and they lost the premier division title to Rangers only on the last day of the season in 1991.

The next year, Smith was sacked. A record that proved unacceptable at the time would earn him hero reverence nowadays. Aberdeen intend to secure investment with a stock market flotation and it is desperation as much as loyalty that makes fans eager to hear more of the club's plans.

KEVIN MCCARRA
Scottish commentary



Porrini, left, is congratulated by Stuart McCall after opening the scoring for Rangers at Ibrox

Trophy holders brought down at first hurdle

Woking 0
Margate 1

BY WALTER GAMMIE

A SPLENDIDLY struck goal by Eliot Martin in the 81st minute enabled Margate to knock the holders of the FA Umbro Trophy out of the competition in the first round at Kingfield on Saturday.

Woking's surprise defeat maintains a hit and miss record. Three times in the past six seasons, they have lifted the Trophy at Wembley; the other three years, they have gone out in the first round.

Martin's scoring effort, curled in with his right foot, was Margate's only attempt on goal, but they showed great concentration and discipline in defence against their Vauxhall Conference opponents.

"We're used to winning," Chris Kinnear, manager of the Dr Martens League southern division side, said. "We're still in every competition except the FA Cup and we had a good run in that." Their Cup day in front of the cameras against Fulham helped to ensure that his team — weakened by the absence of four experienced players — approached the task without the nerves that might otherwise have afflicted them.

For John McGovern, the Woking manager, the defeat

ranked less than his team's departure from the FA Cup. "We didn't create anything at all against Southend," he said. "Here, we created five good opportunities and didn't take them — so we deserved to lose." Two fell in the first half to Darran Hay, whose fine scoring record cannot disguise an occasionally poor touch.

After the interval, Timothy, set up by Betsy, skipped past a defender to line up a shot that he ran narrowly wide of a post and, at the end of a sweeping move, Steele, who just needed to apply a headed touch to finish off Smith's cross, saw the ball fly to safety off his shoulder.

In Woking's final assault, Ellis's corner was met perfectly by West, only for Turner, the Margate goalkeeper, to block it with his body.

With his team standing fourth in the Conference, McGovern was quick to point out that Woking's season is far from over. He might make changes, though. "I'm going to go away to decide if the time has come for me to persuade the board to buy another midfielder player and striker," he said.

WOKING (3-4-1-2): 1. Betsy — K. Brown, W. Smith, M. Barry — N. Biley, S. Thompson (sub: S. Smith, Barry), A. Ellis, D. Timothy. **MARGATE** (3-5-2-1): 1. Turner — I. O'Connell, S. Edmund, A. Broughton — M. Pappas, P. Whittington, D. Lamb, M. Murray, S. Martin. **Referee:** D. Gollagher.

Savio adds spice to Brazilian blend

BY OUR SPORTS STAFF

SAVIO BORTOLINI upstaged Roberto Carlos and Juninho, his fellow Brazilians, by making a dramatic impact on the Madrid derby. Bortolini, who joined Real Madrid from Flamengo for £8 million just before Christmas, came on as a substitute after 62 minutes and opened the scoring six minutes later.

Three points would have sent Real back to the top of the Spanish league table, but José Mari Romero equalised for Atlético Madrid, who were at home, four minutes from time. All the highlights came in the final quarter of an otherwise dull game.

"I'm very happy with my goal because it almost tied up a victory," Savio said. "Now I can hold my head high because we deserved to win." The goal came when Roberto Carlos found enough space to make a typical foray down the left wing and, from his cross, Savio ran on to the ball

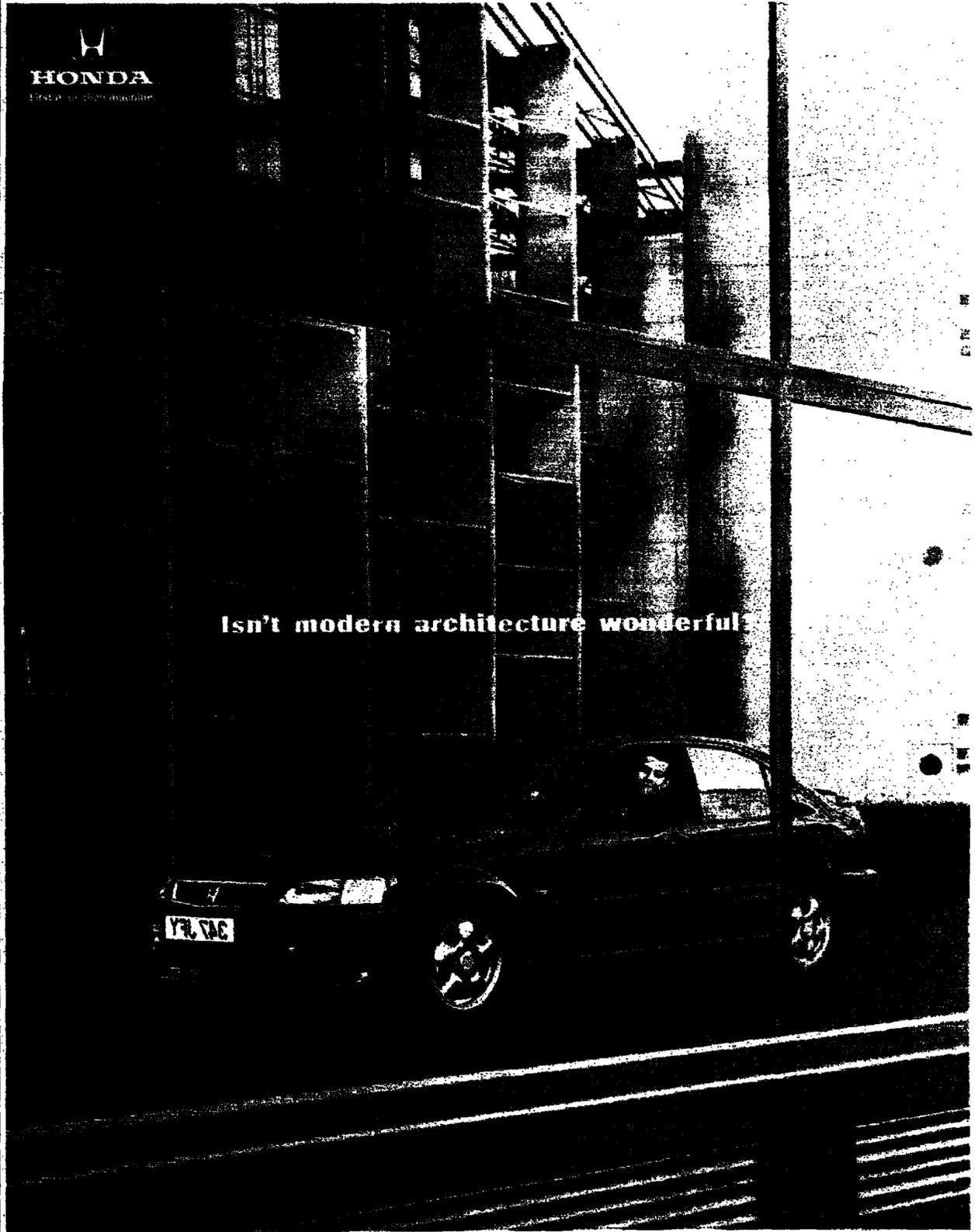
and slotted it past Molina, the Atlético goalkeeper.

That looked to have settled the match in Real's favour, but Atlético equalised when the ball came out of a goal-mouth scramble to José Mari, who blasted it past Cañizares from the edge of the box.

In France, Metz stayed on top of the first division with a hard-fought 1-0 home victory over Rennes, while AS Monaco, their nearest challengers, were beaten 1-0 in the derby match with Cannes.

Lionel Letizi, the goalkeeper, was the man at the heart of the victory for Metz, saving a penalty from Bedrossian seven minutes from time. Rodriguez scored after 44 minutes to keep Metz clear at the top.

The latest setback for Monaco followed their elimination from the league cup by Niort, of the second division, earlier in the week. Marco Grassi, a former Monaco player, was the goalscorer.



Isn't modern architecture wonderful?



Panucci, of Real Madrid, is grabbed by Vieri, of Atletico

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Table with 3 columns: Team, Goals, Points. Lists Arsenal, Liverpool, Manchester United, Chelsea, Tottenham Hotspur, Blackburn Rovers, Newcastle United, West Ham United, Everton, and Wimbledon.

OVERSEAS

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Table with 3 columns: Team, Goals, Points. Lists Charlton Athletic, Huddersfield Town, Ipswich Town, and other teams in the First Division.



Table with 3 columns: Team, Goals, Points. Lists Dundee United, Aberdeen, Motherwell, and other teams in the Premier Division.



Paulo Sergio, centre, of Roma, threads his way between Leonardo and Zvonimir Boban, of AC Milan, during their Serie A match at the San Siro stadium which ended as a 0-0 draw. Photograph: Luca Bruno

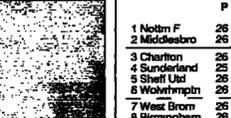


Table with 3 columns: Team, Goals, Points. Lists Notts County, Peterborough, Scarbrough, and other teams in the First Division.



Table with 3 columns: Team, Goals, Points. Lists Bristol Rovers, Northampton, and other teams in the Second Division.

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP

Table with 3 columns: Team, Goals, Points. Lists Arsenal, Liverpool, Manchester United, Chelsea, Tottenham Hotspur, Blackburn Rovers, Newcastle United, West Ham United, Everton, and Wimbledon.

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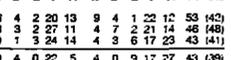


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FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP

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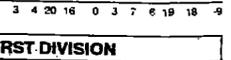


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BBC2 flights of fancy no afternoon delight

By the standards of what had gone before, yesterday's final from the world darts championship between Richie Burnett, of Wales, and Raymond Barneveid, of Holland, was a bit of a novelty. It was live.

True, there had been chunks of live, or acceptably "as live" coverage, in *Grandstand* on Saturday, of the semi-final between Barneveid and Colin Monk. Ditto the impressively one-sided contest between Burnett and Roland Scholten, which came to a live-looking conclusion early on Saturday evening on BBC2.

But, for the rest of the week, it has been hour after hour of recorded coverage, far too much to qualify as anything

that might be called "highlights". If more people realised exactly what it was that has been filling four hours of BBC2 every weekday afternoon, there might have been more of a fuss. You assume it must be a bit like snooker or bowls, the other indoor sports that regularly take the place of *Ready Steady Cook*, where the action may not be entirely live, but it's normally within a frame or end of what's going on at the Crucible or the Guild Hall, Preston.

But darts, from the Lakeside Country Club, Frimley Green, is different. Here, as Dougie Donnelly honestly admits at the top of the programme, we're watching "the best of last night's action". In other words, BBC2's afternoon

schedule has been taken over by recordings that are between 15 to 18 hours old; of an activity that many consider more a pastime than a sport and where the results have been on Ceefax for hours. What else? Oh yes, the best of it has already been shown on the late night programme *the night before*.

Periodically, that turns out to be the good news. For, while the afternoon coverage has been tantamount to abuse of both schedule and viewer, the late night genuine highlights package is a treat, a reminder of what good television darts — even recorded darts — can be. At around 45 minutes long, it forces the producer to make an editorial choice, but with the average leg won with 15



MATTHEW BOND TV ACTION REPLAY

1994. They are good, but they are not Waddell.

They come armed with a battery of computer-generated statistics, which, as Green regularly reminded us, are updated after each throw. On Saturday evening, Burnett won seven legs on the trot, helped by a three-dart average of about 95 and a check out percentage of 66.67 per cent. Scholten, by contrast and no doubt to the dismay of the two million Dutch viewers who were watching, was struggling with a three-dart average in the high eighties and a check-out percentage of zero. Mind you, it took him five legs to get to a possible finish and then it was 170.

Ahead of yesterday's final,

the highest finish thrown was a 164, which I missed. But Green and Parr are men who live in perennial hope. "Needs a treble 20," tends to greet any theoretical finish from 170 downwards, more often than not followed by a silence as the commentator works out what to say about the treble one that has been thrown instead.

Spectacular finishes are the one thing that occasionally defeat the combined talents of director and camera operators. The combination of two cameras focused on the board while another zeroes in on the thrower works fine when all the action is around the treble 20, but the regularity with which the last dart of a three-dart finish is missed suggests that it cannot be easy finding

people who can produce good television pictures and do mental arithmetic at the same time.

There has been enough good action in the past week to convince me that darts does have a future on terrestrial television, especially if the game's organisational schism can be put behind it and the big names that have defected to Sky's breakaway circuit can be persuaded to return. But it is high time the BBC got tough with the organisers. If blanket afternoon coverage is to continue, the early rounds must be switched from evening to afternoon, so that, in future, BBC2 brings us live action rather than old recordings. Nothing worse than second-hand arrows.

"I don't often find other people's bad temper amusing. I get scared. But, from a safe distance, it's theatre"

Miserable Merson misses the high life

Charlton on Saturday afternoon was an exceptionally pleasant place to be. A neat, clean stadium, an unseasonably temperate day, with a distant prospect of the Millennium Dome. A recent Valley crowd, complete with drummers. And a famous underdog victory to be proud of.

For, on Saturday, Charlton Athletic made fools of Middlesbrough, and it was highly entertaining. Those red, red robins just wouldn't quit bob, bob bobbing and the superior Middlesbrough were repeatedly out-manoeuvred, to be justly beaten 3-0. Colours were vibrant, fans were cheerful, moppets smiled — and, in a cosmic sort of way, virtue was rewarded.

And what could cap such a perfect football experience? Well, only the sight of one man, the most famous player on the pitch, suffering the worst case of pre-menstrual tension it has ever been my pleasure to witness. If you weren't there, you won't know (and you may not care), but God, was Paul Merson hacked off.

The thing is, let's be international player and he can't believe what's happening to him, a rather gleeful chap on my right said, "I see," I said, raising my binoculars for a closer look and wondering why Middlesbrough persisted in buying players who considered the club beneath them.

Merson was instantly caught offside and put his hands on his hips. The pained question "What am I doing here?" was written all over him. Also "Is it really only half past three?", "Don't I play for England sometimes?" and "Dear God, when will I wake up back at Arsenal?"

My friend spotted my binoculars. "Does he look any less ugly through those?" he wondered aloud. "Um, about the same," I said, noncommittally. Merson's personal comeliness was hardly the issue at the moment, I thought. More to the point was whether, as a walking, teetering nitroglycerine

LYNNE TRUSS



simple, Merson would detonate and explode on contact with the next Charlton defender who shut him down, knocked him over or removed the ball from his feet.

Personally, I don't often find other people's bad temper amusing. I get scared. But, at a safe distance, of course, it's theatre and there's no point denying that the sight of someone "losing it" is a big factor for the spectator of football. Niggling, needling, the battle for self-control — all are tut-tutted on television, but are undeniably part of the appeal.

Very few players can be relied on never to turn nasty. Gianfranco Zola is the only one I can think of and since he's the nicest player on the planet, with equanimity in the face of tactical clattering that is nothing short of saintly, he doesn't really count.

Defenders knock Zola down, you see, and he gets up, rubs his ankle and extends a sportsmanly hand. "No hard feelings," he appears to say, unbelievably. As his persecutors trot back to pos-



Don't look back in anger: The frustration of no longer being an Arsenal player does appear to be getting to Merson as he wallows in the first division

ition, he even pats them. One can only imagine (or hope) that he's got a big brother in the crowd making notes and that the pat-on-the-back is code for "sort this one out later in the car park". Anything else is just too good to be true.

Back at Charlton, by contrast, Merson was going quietly bonkers on the pitch. Seen the ball, Paul? Any idea what it looks like? When he wasn't finding himself offside, he was being cordoned off with scissor-moves, by three efficient defenders at a time. He would attempt to retrieve a pass and find the ball gone already.

Anyone who has fed ducks on a riverbank will be able to picture the manoeuvre. "This one's for you," you say, aiming half a slice of

granary at the big duck. "Where?" it says and, by the time it has looked in the right direction, half a dozen sparrows have nipped in, grabbed the grub and flown off, with an audible "tee hee".

Was he playing below form, or was he just too cleverly sidetracked? Either way, he was a duck out of water and he didn't like it. And his hand in the third Charlton goal cannot have helped any efforts to keep a steady temper.

By this stage (the 58th minute), he had already been booked (to a hearty home-crowd cheer) for re-monstrating. Added to that, Charlton fans had already shouted such personal taunts as "Up yer nose" and "What a waste of money".

Merson's spirits could hardly be sky-high. And then the assistant referee gave a debatable corner to Charlton. Mark Kinsella took it and Merson intercepted heroically with his head, placing the ball helpfully at the left foot of Shaun Newton. "Hey, thanks, I owe you one," Newton said with surprise, and drove it efficiently into the net for 3-0.

Well, Oh dear. This incident led to quite a commotion of the field as well. A Middlesbrough coach had words with the assistant referee. The assistant referee promptly reported this to the ref. And the ref (Mr Harris) had words at the dugout in a

menacing manner. Gosh. More people were losing it! What an interesting afternoon!

Unfortunately, Bryan Robson was out of sight in the dugout, so I can't report how he coped with all this thwarting. I can only report that he didn't run around as if his coat was on fire and that he didn't substitute Merson, despite the danger of bookings (Merson got involved in a final shoving fracas just before the whistle, for which he, luckily, wasn't penalised).

I have every sympathy for Middlesbrough, whose dying star burnt so spectacularly at the end of last season, but it's just worth saying that, when other people are striped pink with annoyance, a cool feeling of superiority can be

frankly enjoyable. This explains why Kipling's *Smug II* is the nation's favourite poem, perhaps (something has to).

There was an awkward consequence to Charlton's triumph on Saturday, of course. With promotion to the Premiership now on the cards, shouldn't they start discreetly back-peddalling for their own safety? Middlesbrough, typified by the fissionable Merson, clearly hated playing so badly, but the root of their frustration was surely that they were playing in the wrong division. But, imagine being promoted above your capabilities. Promotion for Charlton sounds lovely, but it would bring very few days as splendid as Saturday, that's for sure.

SPORTS LETTERS

LET'S GET IT RIGHT!

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Etiquette on the golf course

From Mr L. Fraser-Mitchell

Sir, The incoming captain of the Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews, Dr Sandy Matthews, may be mistaken if he places the sole blame for slow play and other bad course manners upon the poor example set by some of the country's professionals.

I have been for 35 years a member of one of Surrey's oldest golf clubs (I was captain in 1970) and those joining that club and others of similar vintage were inculcated into traditional good behaviour, in respect of the game.

From the early Eighties onwards, however, new clubs sprung up all over the country, created solely as commercial enterprises, some without even captains or committees, the total membership being "new", both to clubs and to the game itself, with no knowledge of the game's etiquette and no more experienced players to teach them. It is here that much of this disturbing situation originated.

Hopefully, in due course, as these clubs become older and

Histrionics of leg-before appeals

From Mr R.W. Morris

Sir, I have just watched on television that very funny Australian duo, Healey and Warne, performing at the MCG in the current production of *Australia v South Africa*. In the festive season, their variation of the custard-pie routine made for good slapstick comedy — but not cricket.

Is it not time, now that action is available for instant replay, that patently unfair leg-before

begin to establish themselves, the sportsmanship and good manners traditional to the game will be re-established.

Yours faithfully, LESLIE FRASER-MITCHELL, Fraser's Rest, Briar Close, Necton, Norfolk PE37 8HB.

Jamaican dangers

From Mr Roy Cummings

Sir, As a British-born citizen of Jamaican parentage, I was dismayed to read Alan Lee's comments (report, January 9) concerning the England cricketers' early transfer to Jamaica. For too long has the island been portrayed as an island of slaughter and murder. Certainly, there are killings, but

appeals are punished? Healey and Warne asked the question on occasions too numerous to count. If, on playback, it is obvious to the umpires that an appeal was frivolous and involved gamesmanship, the fielding side should be penalised.

Yours faithfully, R.W. MORRIS, 1 Parkmead, Broadpark Road, Torquay TQ2 6TD.

The Motson affair

From Mr Alec Gallagher

Sir, I read with anger and disbelief the article (January 7) about John Motson's so-called "racist" comments. What is racism? The definitions given in the *Concise Oxford*

Dictionary may differ slightly from those in the *Collins Concise Dictionary* in terms of their wording, but their meanings agree perfectly. Racism is "a belief in the superiority of a particular race, prejudice based on this" (Oxford), or "abusive or aggressive behaviour towards members of another race..." (Collins). I defy anyone, and particularly journalists and broadcasters, to place either of these interpretations upon Motson's comments. They were concerned purely with the difficulty of distinguishing between the physiognomies of people belonging to a race outwardly different to our own.

John Motson has merely become the latest victim of the idiotic, politically correct philosophy which determines

that, in the inventory of heinous crime, causing offence to someone is right up there with rape, murder and genocide.

Your headline suggested that Motson should apologise. I hope he does not. I hope he will demand apologies from those who have slandered and libelled him. If these apologies are not forthcoming, I would think that an annual salary of £140,000 should buy a pretty good lawyer.

Yours faithfully, ALEC GALLAGHER, 4 Mavis Court, 4 Raven Close, Colindale NW9 5BJ.

From Mr Adrian Brodwin

Sir, With the main protagonists for this year's Formula One world championship (Ferrari and now Williams) both sporting red liveries, will this not create problems of almost John Motson proportions for the commentator, Murray Walker?

Yours faithfully, ADRIAN BRODWIN, 93 Kingsley Way, NZ QEL.

Correspondence should include a daytime telephone number.

IN TIMES SPORT NEXT WEEK

Tomorrow: Tim Henman battles to retain his title at the Sydney International tournament — his first ATP tour success this time last year

Wednesday and Thursday: FA Cup — can the top teams survive tricky replays? Arsenal visit Port Vale, Wimbledon travel to Wrexham. Plus non-league Cheltenham and Hereford entertain league opposition

Football Saturday: Including outstanding columnists Steve McManaman and Danny Baker, and Oliver Holt's interview

SCHOOL SPORT: LAWS CONQUERS KNOLE MUD AND TURNS THOUGHTS TO KENYA SUNSHINE

Winchester holiday efforts rewarded

By JOHN GOODBODY

ANYONE who believes that it is impossible for academic and sporting excellence to co-exist at the same school should have been at the 25th Knole Run in Kent on Saturday.

Winchester College is invariably ranked top or close to the top of the A-level league tables, yet here was the school's cross-country squad winning the boys' race for the fourth successive year from an entry of 36 teams.

The cancellation of the inter-counties championships on Saturday meant that most of the schools were at full strength and it also resolved the dilemma of many outstanding athletes, who might have been tempted to compete at Luton.

Oliver Laws, of Shrewsbury, had always planned to defend his title and he did so successfully with another peerless show of front-running over an often spongy 5.9-mile course winding over the wooded hills that surround Knole House. He will be one of the favourites for the national schools' cross-country championships in March. In second place was Mark Best, of Winchester, who also finished as runner-up last



Competitors tackle one of the climbs during the boys' race of the Knole Run on Saturday. Photograph: Gill Allen

year. The college packed its six scorers in the first 26 places to win the team event, with Shrewsbury finishing second and RGS Guildford third.

The Winchester boys were given the usual training schedules for the Christmas

holidays and were contacted regularly to see how they were progressing. Colin Upton, the master-in-charge at Winchester, said: "The barrage of phone calls was intense. We were more anxious this year."

Best, who was an 800-metre

finalist in the South of England Under-20 championships last year, says that the pre-eminence of Winchester in recent years owes much to the support from the staff. "The boys respond to it. Everyone is prepared to turn out. No one

shirks training sessions," he said.

After academic work is completed, the boys run through the streets of the cathedral city, beginning at 9.15pm. That is how academic and sporting success are achieved and one

advantage that boarding schools will always enjoy. "The run is something to which I look forward at the end of a hard day," Best said.

Laws will be reading business management in Britain after a gap year in which he wants to do some warm-weather training in Kenya perhaps? "Actually, it had crossed my mind," he said.

The girls' race, over 2.2 miles, was bizarre. Ardingly had five runners in the top 15 — four were needed to score — but they were split between the A and B teams, so that their A team only finished fourth in the competition. Selection difficulties arising from Christmas training defeated them. The team event was won by Sevenoaks, the hosts, with Natalie King, a biathlete, and Nina Ammundsen finishing fifth and sixth.

Tim Marly, the school's master-in-charge, said: "We hadn't many outstanding female athletes, but they make up for it in grit and effort. A lot of girls are not that keen on cross-country, but we have a nucleus of competent runners."

The individual winner was Vicky Tester, of Brentwood.

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DANCE SPORT

Britons seeking to shine among galaxy of stars

By RUTH GLEDHILL

WHEN the couples wait on to the floor this week in the Star Ball, the most glamorous event of the dance sport championship season, the professionals can expect a strong challenge from the up-and-coming youngsters. Timothy Howson and Joanne Bolton.

With the leading couple, Augusto Schiavo and Caterina Arzenon, from Italy, returning to the floor from injury and the next two couples running neck and neck in the ratings, few are placing bets on the contest at the Grosvenor House ballroom in London on Wednesday night.

However, aiming to oust Italy's established second couple, Fabio Seimi and Simona Fancello, from fourth place are Howson and Bolton, who are tipped as future world champions.

Howson and Bolton — classic exponents of the English style of dance and trained by Ernie Chait, the leading coach, and others — are heading the challenge to the top being mounted by the younger generation of professionals.

Their performance at the Star, organised by the Ballroom Dancers' Federation, will be closely watched to see how much distance they can put between themselves and the dynamic Italian couple, Massimo Georgianni and Alessia Manfredini, who are also pushing hard to be the best in the world.

"We took one dance off Seimi at the International in October," Howson, 27, said. "Of course we would like to aim for first place, but realistically we can aim for fourth."

Since turning professional nearly two years ago, Howson and Bolton, who were Britain's top amateurs, have seen their lives transformed, demonstrating the rich rewards that are on offer in the dance sport business in the wake of Olympic recognition.

As amateurs, they secured sponsorship from Chris Anne, the couture company, but still struggled to make ends meet on Howson's income from his car valeting business. They had no home of their own but lived with Howson's parents in High Wycombe. Yet as

professionals they have been invited abroad 18 times to the past 12 months to places including Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, Spain and Poland to coach foreign couples, demonstrate and compete.

Although coy about their earnings abroad, where professionals can command as much as £50 an hour for teaching and thousands of pounds for a demonstration, they are now in a position to buy their own home.

According to form, the victors at the Star should be Schiavo and Arzenon, who have been dancing together since the age of seven and won their first Italian championship in 1981.

As 12-times Italian, 1993 world, undefeated Open British and United Kingdom amateur champions, they seemed destined for the top



Howson and Bolton have high hopes for the Star Ball

when they won the Star in 1996 and became Italy's best hope of taking on Marcus and Karen Hilton, eight times the world champions, and the world No.2 couple, Luca Baricchi and Loraine Barry.

After their career was interrupted by a foot injury to Schiavo, they came back for the professional world championship at Blackpool in November, only to be forced to withdraw once more because of injury.

Neither Hilton nor Baricchi are dancing at the Star this year, although they will be expected to resume their rivalry at the United Kingdom championships in Bournemouth next week.

ICE HOCKEY

Five-goal romp takes Ayr four points clear

AYR Scottish Eagles increased their lead at the top of the Superleague to four points with a 5-3 success over Bracknell Bees. It was their sixth successive win in the league (Norman de Mesquita writes).

They had three goals on the board after only six minutes of the second period and led 5-1 with ten minutes to go, only to see the Bees score twice in the closing stages to add an air of respectability to the score.

While Nottingham Panthers and Manchester Storm were fulfilling Express Cup fixtures, Cardiff Devils confirmed that they will not relinquish their league title without a fight. Their 6-2 win at Sheffield Steelers moved them to within six points of Ayr with two games in hand.

Ivan Matulik, the Devils' captain, provided their inspiration. He opened the scoring after only 34 seconds, completed his hat-trick after 12 minutes and then, for good measure, added a fourth goal early in the final period.

The Steelers found the Cardiff power-play too hot to handle and, although they had only three minor penalties in the game, Cardiff scored during all three of them.

One certainty in the Express Cup is that Newcastle Cobras will not be able to take advantage of next month's final being played in their home rink after they experienced their eighth defeat in as many matches on Saturday, losing 6-3 to Nottingham Panthers.

Manchester Storm continue to find consistency elusive and it is now more than two months since they have managed to win two successive games. On Saturday, they went down 4-3 in Basinstoke, where a goal by Blair Scott with only 81 seconds remaining in overtime proved decisive.

SKIING

Rare medal may soften Ormond's departure

SOPHIE ORMOND, who has British-born parents but is training with the French Europa Cup team, took all three women's titles in the British and national championships in Tignes, France (a Correspondent writes).

Ormond, 18, who was born in Switzerland and lives in France, should be offered a place in the Great Britain team for the Winter Olympic Games and next month's world junior championships in Szyszak, Poland, where she could bring Britain a first medal since Graham Bell won silver at Sugar Loaf Mountain in 1984. Yet this could be the last year that she races as a British national. A place on the full France team beckons.

Ormond took the women's downhill and junior downhill titles on Saturday and followed those with victory in the super-giant slalom yesterday. The event was raced in conditions of unseasonal sunshine and Ormond added fuel to her challenge for the overall women's title — which she won when she was just 15 and was first eligible to race in a senior event — with a convincing 1.5sec win over Shona Robertson, of Aberdeen.

After losing out in the men's downhill on Friday, when he finished third, Graham Bell won his fourth super-giant slalom in successive years, but only after losing his line at a left-handed gate combination. In the absence of a challenge from Andrew Freshwater, who was racing elsewhere and with whom he tied for the title last year, Bell had enough time to recover and win from Oliver Hall.

"I remember thinking I was done for and then I remembered Andrew wasn't here, so I carried on knowing I might still have a chance of winning," Bell said.

Results, page 39

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Plotting a course in pursuit of glory

BASKETBALL Furious coach points the finger

By NICHOLAS HARLING

IF BIRMINGHAM Bulls finish the season without any honours, they will reflect ruefully on their games with Thames Valley Tigers. The heartbreak of losing out on a place in the National Cup final by a single point on aggregate to the Tigers last month was compounded on Saturday by the controversial late basket from Tony Holley that resigned the Bulls to a third Budweiser League defeat in four games.

Gone is the Bulls' knack of winning close encounters and, in the opinion of Mike Finger, their coach, there is also no longer any point in relying on the officials to make the right decisions. "They just don't have the guts to make calls late in the game," he said after seeing Holley muscle his way to a rebound and complete his 20-point tally on the buzzer, giving Thames Valley a 90-88 win.

Finger, who chased the referee, Roger Harrison, out of Bracknell Sports Centre, was incensed at the manner in which Holley pushed Fabulous Flournoy aside to grasp John McCord's late, wayward shot. "He had his arms all round him, but this kind of thing is nothing new. It was just more violent," Finger said.

Defeat was especially hard on Tony Doney, whose 35 points included 15 in succession for the Bulls in the second quarter. Nigel Lloyd also chipped in with 33 points against his former club, but with only Chris Haslam, the England international, with ten points, also in double figures, Birmingham succumbed to the power of Jason Siemon, who scored 25 points.

Birmingham slipped to third place, overtaken by the Leopards, who were 122-113 winners at Leicester Riders. JaRon Boone's 40 points for the Riders were to little avail as John White (33) and Eric Burks (28) were their usual prolific selves for the champions. Ray Schultz (27) was another big-scoring loser. His contribution failed to bring Watford Royals their first league win. They went down 101-87 at home to London Towers, who preserved their six-point lead at the top.



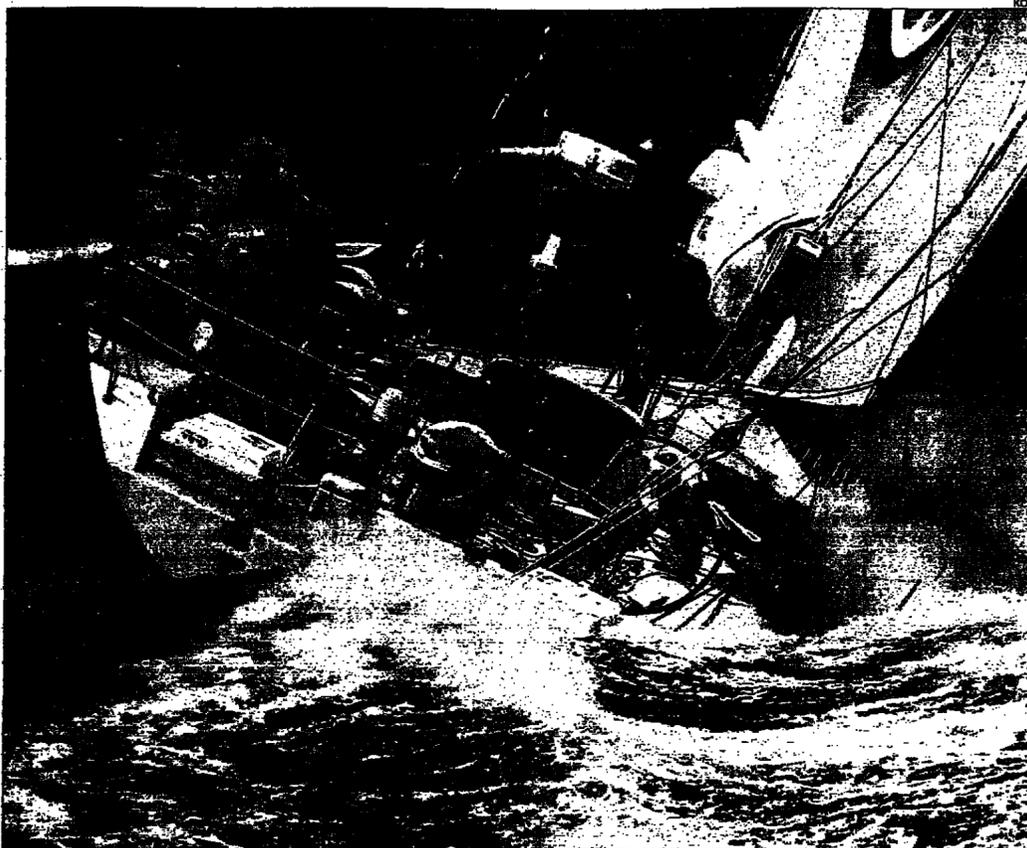
Standbridge, left, and Conner take command

Toshiba is still in good shape in the Whitbread Race, the skipper, Paul Standbridge, says after the fourth leg

One cannot keep saying "we're in good shape, there's plenty of this Whitbread Round the World Race still to come" — which probably eight boats have been saying all along — because time is running out. Despite that, here in Auckland with four of the nine legs now completed, I still think *Toshiba* is in very good shape.

We are in fifth place overall, we've been in sixth and we've been in seventh. It may not seem to be a particularly heroic position, but we are so close to second (*Merit Cup*), third (*Swedish Match*) and fourth (*Innovation Kvaerner*) and now preparing for the highest points-scoring leg of the race, through the Southern Ocean to Brazil, on which I expect *Toshiba* to do well.

One has always to respect the boats in front of you — you cannot go writing them off. *EF Language*, skippered by Paul Cayard, is one we will always treat as a very serious contender and it is at the top of the pile. At one stage in the last leg, *EF Language* was 76 miles behind — a huge margin on a short leg — and you would normally say that if you have that much of a jump on someone, they'll never catch you. In the end, Cayard and



Conner, who joined Standbridge as co-skipper for the fourth leg, steers *Toshiba* through gale-force conditions on the way to Auckland

his crew didn't beat us, but we could see them and we were very nervous of them at the finish. They do show an incredible ability to fight back. They have a quick boat, quick sails and are very disciplined.

Merit Cup, skippered by Grant Dalton, is third overall. Of course, they've just beaten us and won a leg, but I have to say I thought we were going to get the better of them, especially as we knew there was going to be an increasing wind for the final 120 miles. However, they just kept going and we got into a tacking duck. It got quite interesting with Dennis Conner steering the boat. As soon as there was a shift of a

tactical gain to be had, we were banging in tacks, even in 37 knots of breeze, and attacking them the whole way. We did grind them down to a little less than three minutes at the end, but they still beat us. I would have to say they will be very thankful to be second overall — they have had their bad legs.

Swedish Match, skippered by Gunnar Krantz, in third position overall, is a boat with some good friends of mine on board. I must confess that, at the start, I thought they would be one of the easier boats to beat, but they've been ahead of us the whole time, bar the first leg. If we are not careful, they

are going to win this race. They did have a bad first leg, as we did, but we can't really find fault with them. When they sail against another boat, they are as quick or quicker and their tactics are good, because they are often at the front of the pack.

Knut Frostad's *Innovation Kvaerner*, which has slipped to fourth, is one I treat as less of a danger than the others. At the moment, they are on the slide and we are on the up, only eight points behind them. I would be surprised if we don't overtake them on the next leg.

Only on this leg have we overhauled *Chessie Racing*, who are sixth. It's great to see George Collins there as the only owner-skipper. I think they will have a respectable result at the end and we are going to have to be careful in future to keep them behind us. I don't think they are going to win, but they could be on the podium at the finish. If they take one place, there are only two others left and we hope *Toshiba* will be in one of them.

Lawrie Smith, skipper of *Silk Cut*, is in seventh position now. After this last leg, when he finished sixth, he must be disappointed — obviously that goes without saying. This was

a tricky leg, though, and I have to say it could have gone either way for a lot of boats. We ended up doing OK and *EF Language* got a fourth, so it was a tough one and the crew of *Silk Cut* could still drag themselves out of it after the next leg. I don't think *Silk Cut* are slow, but I don't think they've got a speed advantage, either. When they line up with other boats, they seem to be competitive, so there's nothing wrong there, but you just have to get it right on the day.

OVERALL STANDINGS: 1. *EF Language* (Swel 37) 2. *Merit Cup* (Kranz) 3. *Swedish Match* (Swel) 312 4. *Innovation Kvaerner* (Krantz) 269 5. *Chessie Racing* (Collins) 204 7. *Silk Cut* (68) 258 8. *EF Ekström* (Swel) 100 9. *Brunelberry* (Holt) 95.

BOXING Rigby earns the chance for world challenge

By SRIKUMAR SEN
BOXING CORRESPONDENT

WAYNE RIGBY, of Manchester, could get the chance to challenge for a world title in his next contest after winning the vacant British lightweight championship at the York Hall, Bethnal Green, on Saturday. He outpointed Tanveer Ahmed, of Glasgow, who had been considered a suitable opponent for Colin Dunne before the Holloway boxer took the World Boxing Union (WBU) lightweight crown.

Jack Trickett, the manager of Rigby, said that he would be asking the WBU to sanction the bout. "Wayne can't fight the other two top British lightweights, Billy Scherer and Michael Ayres, because they are waiting for world title challenges, so the only opening is for him to go for the WBU title," he said.

Trickett wants to take the contest that will bring the most money and is prepared to let Rigby meet Charles Shepherd, the British super-featherweight champion. However, he believes that the bout with Dunne would prove to be the most lucrative. Terry Toole, the manager of Dunne, said he would be happy to accept the challenge, but Rigby, as a challenger, would have to come to London.

Patrick Mullings, the Harrow-based super-bantamweight, whetted the appetite for a return match with Spencer Oliver, of Barnet, when he stopped Sita Makinza, of France, in four rounds. The division, which includes Michael Brodie, the British champion, is the most exciting in the country at the moment. It was a good win for Mullings, who looks like a miniature Nigel Benn, as Makinza was a tough and clever opponent until a right uppercut dislocated the Frenchman's jaw.

Frank Maloney, the manager of Mullings, said: "I've been trying to get Spencer Oliver, but so far his manager has not come to the table — but the fight with him and Michael Brodie will take place, because the public wants to see it."

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

By ROBERT SHEEHAN, BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT

One of Marty Hirschman's claims to fame is that he is the father of two sons, Sam and Dan, each of whom at one time or another was the youngest Life Master in the American Contract Bridge League. On this hand in the 1997 St Louis Nationals, he spotted his only chance.

Dealer East	Game all	IMPs
♠1075		
♥K9763		
♦A1042		
♣4		
♠Q43	♠KJ62	
♥—	♥J5	
♦J9763	♦K	
♣108753	♣AKQ962	
	♠A98	
	♥AQ10942	
	♦Q85	
	♣J	

W N E S
3C (1) 4H 1C All Pass 1H
(1) pre-emptive
Contract: Four Hearts by South. Lead: five of clubs

West's raise to Three Clubs was weak, not a genuine limit raise. Nevertheless, it was feeble of East to pass Four Hearts, rather than pushing on to the laydown Five Clubs. East won the first club and switched to a spade. Hirschman ducked this trick and won the next spade. He noted at once that he could endplay his opponents to lead diamonds for him — but that in itself would not be enough since all it would do was to hold the diamond losers to one, and he needed to avoid a diamond loser altogether to make his contract. He actually needed a singleton diamond honour in one defender's hand to have any chance, and since a singleton king in either hand was more likely than singleton jack with East, that is what he played for.

□ The Macellan international bridge pairs championship will be played at The White House Hotel, Albany Street, London NW1 from Wednesday, January 21 to Friday, January 23. Tickets and information from The Macellan Box Office, 31 Queens Road, Mortlake, London SW14 8PH. Tel: 0181-878 5844.

□ Robert Sheehan writes on bridge Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

By Philip Howard

HILARIA
a. Farces
b. A smelly shrub
c. A festival

MOUSSEUX
a. Moths
b. A breed of poodle
c. Sparkling

NORK
a. A breast
b. A bird
c. A Viking axe

HALUTZIM
a. Pioneers
b. Ritual purification
c. A code of conduct

Answers on page 46

KEENE on CHESS

By RAYMOND KEENE, CHESS CORRESPONDENT

Karpov wins
Anatoly Karpov retained his Fide (world chess federation) championship title by defeating Viswanathan Anand in their encounter in Lausanne. After the match had ended level in a 3-3 tie, speed games were used to break the deadlock. Karpov won the quick play match 2-0, the following being the decisive eighth game.

White: Viswanathan Anand
Black: Anatoly Karpov
Fide world championship, Lausanne, January 1998

Trompovsky Attack

1. d4	d5
2. Bg5	h6
3. Bh4	c6
4. Nf3	Oe6
5. b3	Bb6
6. e3	Nd7
7. Bc3	Bcd3
8. Qc2	e6
9. c4	Ne7
10. e5	Qe5+
11. Ne3	b6
12. b4	Qxb4
13. O-O	Nf5
14. Rf1	bac5
15. Rb1	c4
16. Qc2	Qe5
17. Rb7	Qe6
18. Rcb1	Bb6
19. e4	Nb4
20. Nbd4	Rb8
21. Rfb8	Bb6
22. axd5	cd5
23. Ng6	bg6
24. Qc6+	Kd8
25. Qc7	Rb8
26. Qxb6	Qe5

Crusade

Viswanathan	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
Anand	0 1 0 0 1 0 0 3
Janney	1 0 1 0 0 1 5
Karpov	

In the above table, 1 represents a win, 0 a draw and 0 a loss.

By Raymond Keene

White to play. This position is from the game Petrosian — Stein, USSR 1960. A discovered check is often a very powerful weapon. How can White make the best use of such a possibility?

Solution on page 46

THE TIMES

SATURDAY

20 P

This Saturday, make a date with the Saturday Times, including the new 100-page glossy magazine.

http://www.the-times.co.uk

CHANGING TIMES

Joanna Hunter joins the balloonists and discovers that the sport's aficionados are definitely not hotheads

Hot stuff in all shapes and sizes

Repeated attempts to become the first person to circumnavigate the globe by hot-air balloon have all seemed to end in spectacular failure. No sooner had American Steve Fossett been forced to make an emergency landing in Russia last week than a Swiss rival was forced to delay another attempt.

With Fossett's effort coming so soon after Richard Branson's much-publicised failure, the casual observer could be forgiven for assuming that ballooning enthusiasts are completely mad. These high-profile attempts reinforce the popular perception of ballooning as an eccentric millionaire's fable. But Branson and his mates are not alone. Last year, according to the British Ballooning and Airship Club, about 75,000 passengers flew in balloons.

Being lily-livered, I had reservations about gadding off in an out-sized laundry basket. But statistically ballooning is very safe, with only one fatal accident in the UK since 1974. The balloon canopy, or envelope, looks flimsy, but specially developed "rip-stop" nylon makes tearing difficult.

The Bristol Ballooning Fiesta, during which I made my maiden voyage last summer, is the biggest of its kind in Europe. But on the morning I was due to fly, nobody was going anywhere. By 5.30am a thick mist had descended. Just after seven o'clock, Ian Ashpole — chief pilot of the world's leading hot-air balloon company, Flying Pictures, and a man whose credits include bungee jumping and skydiving from balloons — broke the news:

"Better to be on the ground wishing you were in the air than in the air wishing you were on the ground," he reasoned.

Nobody seemed too bothered — it soon became apparent that patience is a prerequisite of ballooning. Cooler temperatures just after dawn and dusk make for the safest times to fly, so we waited for dusk.

Nick Calvert, for whom I acted as crew, spends half the year working as a professional pilot. Ten years ago his boss took up the sport and asked him to design a balloon. Mr

Calvert went to see what all the fuss was about and has been hooked ever since. "I couldn't believe it — everyone was in bed by ten. I thought they were really wet. Then they knocked on my door at 5am and I realised why."

Mr Calvert talked me through the basics: the intense heat produced by burning propane gas (stored in cylinders in the basket) causes the balloon to rise. There are two burners, the deafening main burner, and the optimistically named whisperer, used when flying over livestock or residential areas. By varying the heat, the pilot can take advantage of different air currents — but not knowing where you are going is half the fun.

Julia Dean, another enthusiast for the sport, said: "Ballooning makes people smile. It's true escapism — when you're up there, it puts everything into perspective."

Hannah Cameron, whose father Don Cameron is a ballooning legend in his own lifetime, has been smitten since she was five. "It's like floating like a cloud," she said



The Bristol Ballooning Fiesta is one of the biggest in Britain: not knowing where you will end up is half the fun, but bad weather can mean a long wait to fly

dreamily. By mid-afternoon the weather forecast had greatly improved. We began again: lying the basket on its side and filling the envelope with cold air from a small lawnmower-like fan. I held the crown rope attached to the top of the balloon and walked — or was pulled — forward with it until the balloon was inflated. When Nick Calvert first did this, he slipped and fell on the grass. The two other passengers and I clambered into the basket.

With a roar of the burner we were off, surrounded by 150 other balloons below and above us. It felt as if we were staying still and the world was moving away from us. Initially, I clung on desperately, but the sides of the basket are so high that I felt quite safe. As you take in the view you can't help but relax: the calm is intoxicating. We flew over Bristol, over the Clifton suspension bridge, on towards Bath. Occasionally we flew low so that we



Steve Fossett waves before taking off on his record attempt

could almost hear the people below us talking as they waved.

Landing was my only remaining fear. Mr Calvert spotted a likely looking field and, bending our knees and turning away from the direction of travel so as not to fall out, we came back to earth. The

wicker gave a suspicious creak, but it was remarkably painless. We were greeted by our friends who had followed in the car. We packed the equipment back into the trailer and headed off for a celebration breakfast. After all that waiting, it was over in an hour.

GETTING STARTED

CONTACT the BBAC (01604 870025) for details of your local balloon club. To obtain a pilot's licence, or purple book, you are required to spend a minimum of 16 hours in the air, four of which must be with a qualified instructor. This must be completed within a 12-month period. You are also required to pass written exams on aviation law, meteorology, navigation, balloon systems and aviation medicine.

In the UK, crew costs vary from a contribution towards fuel (an hour's flight costs approximately £15) to a round of drinks. Cameron Balloons Ltd (0117 9661168) offers pilot and crew training courses in the Bristol area. Virgin Balloon Flights (0880 132 090) offer a

package from £135 which includes approximately one hour of flying time, traditional champagne toast and certificate.

A complete balloon, including envelope, burner, basket and cylinders, costs from £10,210. For details contact Cameron Balloons Ltd. You will also need a car and trailer, local maps, a compass, good shoes, cotton-based clothing and leather gloves.

Forthcoming events include the Unipart Chateau d'Oex Balloon Meet, Switzerland (January 17-23). For details contact Chateau d'Oex Tourisme 00 41 26 924 2525. The Unipart Bristol Ballooning Fiesta runs from August 6-9; for details ring the information line on 0891 252262.

Range from £21,400. Model shown 2.0 16v Turbo Touring Pack, £23,000. Prices correct at time of going to press. Call 0248 86 99 88 for more information. For export or tax-free sales call 01772 85 26 86.

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CHANGING TIMES

هكرامن اللان

RESULTS AND STATISTICS

TODAY
Interim: Cammell Laird Holdings, Coronation Holdings, Ellis & Everard, Mulberry Group, Parperal, Savills, Tomkins, Triad Group, Fyffes, Economic Statistics, UK December producer prices index, UK November industrial/manufacturing output, Confederation of British Industry Q4 financial services survey, US Treasury auction of short-term bills.

TOMORROW
Interim: Bepak, Capital for Commerce, Debenham Lawson, Jura Hotel Group, Savills, Fyffes, Economic Statistics, UK December producer prices index, UK November industrial/manufacturing output, Confederation of British Industry Q4 financial services survey, US Treasury auction of short-term bills.

WEDNESDAY
Interim: Aberforth, Budgets, Dillons Group, First Technology, Martin Currie, Mirovia Investment Trust, Stanley Leisure, Fyffes, Aberforth Smaller Companies, Irish Continental, Robert H Lowe, Economic Statistics, Halifax Q4 1997 UK house price survey, UK December unemployment, UK November average earnings, unit wage costs, minutes of December Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee meeting, US December retail sales.

THURSDAY
Interim: FI Group, Fyffes, Greenwich Resources, Economic Statistics, US November business inventories, US weekly jobless claims.

FRIDAY
Interim: none scheduled. Fyffes: none scheduled. Economic statistics to UK data scheduled for release.

SUNDAY TIMES

The Sunday Telegraph: Bay Yorkshire Water, Estates & General and Anglo Irish Bank Corporation. The Sunday Times: Bay Rolls-Royce, Development Securities, The Mail on Sunday: Buy Mounment Oil & Gas and Merchant Retail. The Express on Sunday: Buy AG Barr, Reed Elsevier and Filtronik Comtek.

COMPANIES

MICHAEL CLARK

Hutchings prepares for showdown

TOMKINS: It looks like being a replay of High Noon for Greg Hutchings, the chief executive, when the conglomerate, which includes Smith & Wesson guns and Ranks Hovis McDougall, unveils half-year figures today.

He has already committed himself to reducing the number of areas the group operates in after coming under pressure from City institutions to restructure the business. Brokers will want to know what progress has been made in disposing of its services to industry division — just one out of a total of six divisions. They say the business should fetch about £210 million, providing a useful boost to the group's already burgeoning cash balance, which at the last count stood at £319 million.

David Allchurch at NatWest Markets, the broker, is forecasting pre-tax profits of £207 million (£168.8 million). Earnings should rise from 8.4p to 9.5p.

The City will also want to know if Tomkins intends to use its surplus cash to extend its current £100 million share buy-back programme.

DIXONS GROUP: Further evidence of just how well, or badly, retailers did during the important run-up period to Christmas will be contained in half-year figures from the high street electrical retailer on Wednesday.

Brokers fear they may go some way to dispelling the growing wave of optimism flowing through the Square Mile last week, in the wake of encouraging trading statements from Burton, Clinton Cards, Signet and JJB Sports.

Nick Bubb at Société Générale Strauss Turnbull, the broker, is looking for pre-tax profits of £76 million (£57.5 million). He is towards the lower end of a range extending from £74 million to £90 million.

Dixons made an encouraging



Greg Hutchings will be looking to defend his company's progress when Tomkins reports

start to 1996 with like-for-like sales reported to be running 17 per cent ahead, boosted by the large number of building society windfalls. That early pace slowed measurably during the second quarter with rising interest rates taking their toll of consumer spending during July, August

and September. Conditions picked up again during October and November but not by the amount needed to make up the lost ground. Overall, like-for-like sales are expected to have risen 9.5 per cent with margins holding steady. Overall sales growth will have been bolstered by new store

openings at Currys and PC World. Sales of white goods have been strong but brown goods have proved indifferent and the position with computers remains unclear. Mr Bubb has already reduced his forecast for the full year by

£10 million to £230 million, but says there is some doubt the group will be able to even achieve this. The payout grows from 2.5p to almost 3p.

FYFFES: A flat performance is expected from the banana importer when full-year figures are unveiled today. Michael Burke at Panmure Gordon, the broker, is looking for pre-tax profits before exceptional of £46.1 million, slightly down on the £46.5 million the previous year. Earnings a share will be up from 8.3p to 8.6p.

Mr Burke says the group will have recovered from the downturn seen in the first half. This was caused by paying for the bananas in dollars and selling them on into other European currencies while prices remained subdued. But he maintains the outlook is brighter. Fyffes has managed to digest Geest, which it bought a couple of years back, and prices are recovering.

As with previous years, the dividend is expected to grow 10 per cent to 20p.

STANLEY LEISURE: The proposed acquisition by Ladbroke from Bass of the Coral betting chain will no doubt have been keenly watched by the bookies at Stanley, which reports half-year results on Wednesday.

Brokers say that if Ladbroke is forced to unload more than the £28 shops it is already selling to the Tote shops in order to allow the deal to go through, then Stanley could pick some of them up on the cheap.

Results this time round are expected to show pre-tax profits up from £7.4 million to £10 million helped by 49% the high margin numbers game, which was introduced to compete with the National Lottery.

Profits in the first half were hit by the seven consecutive wins by Frankie Dettori, the jockey, at Ascot last year.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Labour and earnings point way

The turmoil in Asia is likely to overshadow a raft of important data emerging from the UK and the US this week. Indonesia will remain the main focus of attention, with concerns mounting about the future of the IMF reform programme and political outlook.

The UK labour market, and average earnings in particular, is now regarded as the biggest threat to the inflation outlook. MMS International, the economic forecasting group, finds that the market consensus is for annual growth in earnings to remain static in November at 4.25 per cent. The figures will be published on Wednesday, along with the December claimant count, which is forecast to fall by 20,000 — about the same as in November.

The retail prices data for December, which will be published tomorrow, should show headline inflation falling from its recent high of 3.7 per cent to 3.6 per cent. The target measure of underlying inflation, which excludes mortgage interest payments, will also head lower from 2.8 per cent to 2.7 per cent.

The November output figures, out today, are expected to reveal a bounce back in the manufacturing sector from October. The market is forecasting a monthly rise of 0.3 per cent, pushing the annual rate from 1.3 per cent in October to 2 per cent. However, overall industrial production is expected to slow from an annual rate of 1.9 per cent to 1.6 per cent.

The producer prices data, also published today, should continue to show subdued pipeline price pressures. Factory gate prices are expected to have increased by 0.1 per cent in December, leaving annual growth at a modest 0.6 per cent compared with 1 per cent the previous month. Raw material prices promise substantial annual falls.

In the US, consumer prices and retail sales data will be eagerly reviewed for any signs that the Asian crisis is having a deflationary impact on the US economy. The CPI is predicted to show a monthly increase of only 0.1 per cent. However, December retail sales are expected to reveal a seasonal jump in spending, with monthly growth jumping from 0.2 per cent to 0.5 per cent.

ALASDAIR MURRAY

Fraser Nelson on what The Times 100 has to offer

Guidance for students on the ever-changing face of business

Ever wondered exactly what education has to do with selling coffee? How Dr Martens has managed to stay trendy since 1959? How FKI really did invent a better mousetrap, or how Marks & Spencer continues to succeed in an ever-changing retail environment?

These are among the fascinating issues of business strategy which are detailed in this year's The Times 100. This specialist guide for students of business and economics is now in its third edition and boasts a collection of inside stories from more than 50 major organisations.

The case studies, aimed at assisting the teaching of GCSE A level and GNVQ business studies syllabuses, range from Bass explaining how it developed a global strategy to ICI detailing a project to turn waste to wealth. Akzo Nobel takes students into the tricky exercise of balancing corporate and product branding, while Nationwide explains the thinking behind its sponsorship of the football league.

The publication is sent free of charge, courtesy of the contributors and Times Newspapers, to all UK secondary schools and colleges of higher

and further education — about 5,700 institutions with, between them, about 750,000 14 to 18-year-old students doing business studies or economics.

The case studies underline the message that business is anything but boring. Nestlé, for instance, should capture students' attention with its case study of the famous Gold Blend series of adverts.

Its entry explains how the "will they? won't they?" tension built up a strong following over the years — and helped to catapult the coffee jars into kitchens everywhere.

It details how, after Gold Blend's market share slumped to 6.5 per cent in 1987, Nestlé set out to persuade shoppers that "Gold Blend would be the coffee you drink to demonstrate your sophistication".

The result was a mini-series of adverts — inspired by the romantic tension then used by television series such as Dallas and Moonlighting. Six years later, Gold Blend's market share was back up to 9 per

cent and one in three television viewers remembered the advertisement.

Dr Martens' entry details the company's battle to stay a step ahead of the fashion footwear market — and to rely on nostalgic affection for its steel toe-capped boot.

It also admits it suffered severe supply problems four years ago after the success of its marketing was creating demand with which the factories could not cope.

Orders were lost, and at one point only 40 per cent of shoes were being made on time — leading to a meltdown in staff morale

and stressed relations with its clients. It details how it introduced a computerised production system that better coordinated the arrival of raw materials with production patterns. By freeing all new shoe orders, it had worked its way through the backlog and finally managed a complete recovery within three years.

The idea behind The Times 100 is to give students up-to-date information that can be

used alongside the textbooks so that they can understand an ever-changing business world.

Dave Needham from Nottingham Trent University, one of the authors, said: "With business studies, the curriculum changes only every few years — but business changes all the time."

"The quality of teaching is determined by the availability of resources and how well they keep up to date in the business world and The Times 100 simply supplies teachers with the wherewithal to do that."

The pack comes with a study guide, showing how each company's entry fits in with the syllabus for A levels, GCSE and Scottish Highers, plus a "user's guide" to the business pages of The Times.

The Times 100 has been read and welcomed by everyone from Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, to business studies teachers — who recently marked the study an overall average of 85 per cent for relevance, content and design.

Copies were sent out over Christmas and should now be in classrooms across the UK. Any secondary school and college in the country that has not received one can call 01937 541941 to place an order.

Refund by Companies House over snags

By ADAM JONES

COMPANIES HOUSE, the government executive agency that keeps company records for public viewing, has been forced to refund users of its new electronic database service after repeated technical hitches last week.

Computers were often unable to connect to the database, threatening to delay the lawyers, accountants and other professionals who need the information for tasks such as setting up companies.

Companies House sent letters to hundreds of customers admitting that there had been serious problems and waiving the monthly subscription fee of £7.50 for this month.

Companies House blamed a mixture of computer system and telecommunication problems for the hitches, which comes after a change in contractors. A contract under which Mercury provided the public with access to the Companies House database has ended. To replace it, Companies House developed an expanded service with Orchid, part of a French telecommunications company.

This was launched initially to run in parallel with the Mercury service in late 1997, but last week was the first peak period when all users had to switch to the new service, a Companies House spokesman said. It appeared that the problems had improved significantly on Friday.



Owen Oyston, whom the Radio Authority regards as not a fit person to hold licences

Oyston radio rescue plan

By RAYMOND SNOODY, MEDIA EDITOR

OWEN OYSTON, the multi-millionaire businessman jailed after being convicted of rape and indecent assault, has, it is believed, put forward a range of new ownership proposals to save his four commercial radio stations. The Radio Authority, the industry's regulatory body, said last month after his appeal against conviction was rejected that he was not a fit person to hold commercial radio licences.

The authority made it clear

that it believed that through various companies and methods Mr Oyston controlled the four stations — The Bay (Morecambe Bay) in England and three in Northern Ireland, Heart Beat 1521 (Craigavon), Gold Beat (Cookstown) and City Beat 96.7 (Belfast).

The authority made clear that unless it was clearly demonstrated that Mr Oyston did not control the stations, or different ownership arrangements were made, the licences would have to be revoked and

readvertised. So far, it is believed, Mr Oyston has not attempted to challenge the ITC's ruling that he is not a fit and proper person to control radio licences under broadcasting legislation or that he does not exercise control over the licences.

Instead the authority now has a range of new ownership proposals to consider. If possible it wants to keep the stations on air. A decision is likely within the next two months.



Learning lessons from popular TV programmes, Nestlé opted for romantic tension in its Gold Blend advertisement

Hippies are the key to companies' future

By MARIANNE CURPHEY

THE hippy generation is poised to become the big spenders and business leaders of tomorrow and will change the way companies operate in the future, according to new research.

Those who grew up in the 1960s have never quite cast off liberal ideals and have the largest proportion of disposable income of any social group. They are prepared to spend more on products they believe are environmentally friendly and favour companies taking an ethical approach to manufacturing and investment.

The study, carried out by the Future Foundation and commissioned by BT, found that ethical consumers make up just over a third of the general

population. Aged between 35 and 55, they are more concerned about social issues when selecting brands. Women are also more likely to be ethical than men.

The group worries about crime, education, unemployment, discrimination, homelessness and the environment.

Michael Willmot, of the Future Foundation, said: "In five years' time this generation will be on the boards of major companies and will start to influence policy. They will also be in position to spend a lot. Companies will need to respond to a growing consumer demand for organisations to play a wider role in society — otherwise consumers will take their shopping elsewhere."

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THE FACTS

Turnover: £2,437 million
Pre-tax profit: £336 million
Net assets: £2,865 million
Employees: 11,296
Activities: Owns, maintains and operates Britain's rail infrastructure including tracks, signals, tunnels and stations formerly owned by British Rail. Railtrack was privatised by the Government in May 1996.

THE BOARD

Sir Robert Horton, 57. Appointed chairman in 1994. Formerly chairman and chief executive of British Petroleum. He is a non-executive director of Premier Farnell and Emerson Electrical Company.
Gerald Corbett, 47. Appointed chief executive after the retirement of John Edmonds. A former finance director of Grand Metropolitan and Reclart.
Norman Broadhurst, 55. Appointed finance director in 1994. Formerly joint deputy chief executive of VSEL. He is a director of the Railways Pension Trustee Company and a non-executive of Magnox Electric.
Professor Brian Mellitt, 57. Appointed engineering director in 1995. Formerly engineering director of London Underground. Vice-President of Institution of Electrical Engineers.
David Moss, 51. Appointed director of European Affairs in 1995. Previously an Under Secretary at the Department of Transport.
David Rayner, 57. Appointed director of safety and standards in 1994. Before that he held various posts within British Rail since joining in 1963.
Other non-executive board members are Sir Phillip Beck, 62. Formerly chairman of John Mowlem, he is also a non-executive of Delta and Siebe. Sir Christopher Foster, 66. Is a former partner in Coopers & Lybrand. He is also a non-executive director of the PAC. Christopher Jones, 55. Is a director of the Port of London Authority. Archie Norman, 43. Is MP for Tunbridge Wells and chairman of Aeda. Jennifer Page, 52. Is chief executive of Millennium Central and a director of Equitable Life Assurance Society. Sir Derek Roberts, 65. Is Provost of University College London.

Former British Rail employees will be intrigued to hear that their new boss, Gerald Corbett, chief executive of Railtrack, has an unusual model for Britain's rail network. "Think of McDonald's," he said. "McDonald's is a machine - every person who works there knows what he has to do and why he has to do it."

Mr Corbett may claim some knowledge, having once been finance director of GrandMet, owner of Burger King. However, the real interest in this analogy is that it says much about Railtrack's internal problems and what the future holds for it if its management can transform a sprawling and neglected government department into a lean service company with an eye for the needs of its customers as well as one for the bottom line.

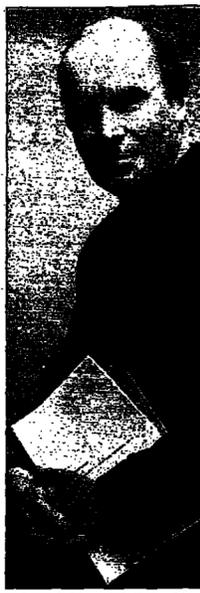
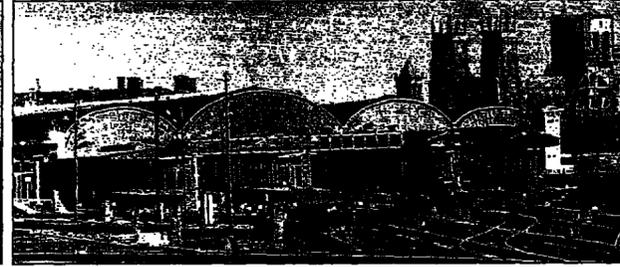
Mr Corbett is joining Railtrack after its tumultuous first 18 months, in which investors have enjoyed a spectacular capital return of 150 per cent. However, the initial quick efficiency gains are over and the locomotive has stalled - train delays attributable to Railtrack failed to improve in the nine months to December and calls for better performance will be shrill from inside and outside the company.

Mr Corbett is frank about the challenge. "The truth is we are struggling," he said. "If we had improved the performance by 10 per cent each year, everyone would stand up and cheer, but last year we improved it by 38 per cent, so everyone thought the target was too soft."

Cheering, however, is not what privatised utilities can expect from the public. "No one remembers the trains that ran on time," Mr Corbett says. Railtrack must also live with a Government whose collective attitude towards the company is ambivalent at best and downright hostile at worst.

Railtrack was floated in May 1996 near the end of an unpopular Conservative Government. Confusion over the complex structure of rail privatisation, public resentment towards utility fatcats and a curiously sentimental attachment by some pressure groups to the old British Rail gave Labour plenty of ammunition with which to attack the sell-off. The flotation prospectus spelt out Labour's position, as expressed by Clare Short, then transport

CORPORATE PROFILE



Railtrack, privatised in 1996, with Sir Robert Horton, top, as chairman, is likened by Gerald Corbett, the new chief executive, right, to McDonald's. York station symbolises the tracks and signals under Railtrack's control, while John Swift, the Regulator, has ensured spending on infrastructure

spokesman, in terms of reconstituting British Rail as "a fully publicly owned, publicly accountable company". A Labour government would "extend public ownership and control over Railtrack".

That was enough to terrify the stock market, and, according to some City analysts, fear that Labour would renationalise Railtrack took £300 million off the sale proceeds, in spite of a fairly lean regime for its directors. The shares were sold at 350p each, just 6.5 times earnings.

However, the price did not stay depressed for long. Ms Short was replaced by Chris Smith, a change that the City correctly saw as the dumping of Labour's anti-privatisation stance. The shares perked up immediately and continued to climb, peaking at £10. In short, Railtrack's history has been similar to other utilities sold off too cheaply, in part for political

reasons but also because of the market's fear of the unknown. Like water and electricity, periodic pronouncements by the Regulator rock the share price. John Swift, the suave barrister who heads the Office of the Rail Regulator, has played an astute political game. Regard-

ed as a Tory appointee by the incoming Government, he recognised that Labour ministers were yearning for a confrontation with the plump and privatised Railtrack. The issue was accumulated underpinning on infrastructure, revealed as the company announced

bumper annual profits last year.

John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister, thundered and Mr Swift demanded more regulatory powers. After some outrage about his bursary from Sir Robert Horton, Railtrack's chairman, the company quietly conceded a licence amendment giving the regulator power to penalise it if it failed to deliver promised network improvements.

Railtrack is no ordinary utility. In spite of the rhetoric and a Railtrack share price that almost thumbs its nose at the new political masters, the Government has not touched the company and there are reasons why the ceasefire could become cosy. Better public transport and more freight on the rails and fewer cars on the road were central to Labour's integrated transport policy, a cornerstone of its election campaign. Now in power but with

the coffers low, it has little choice but to ask the private sector to finance its projects.

Step forward Railtrack. With net worth of almost £3 billion and a market value of £4.8 billion, it is an obvious part of call for ministers with election promises to keep. Mr Corbett reckons that the company is getting on better with the Tony Blair team and he hopes that the proposed Strategic Rail Authority will co-ordinate, and not regulate, the industry. He said: "If the SRA takes on board regulation, it won't be a pound off the share price, it will be three or four."

The existing investment programme will cut interest cover from ten times to just three or four, so Railtrack needs growing profits in order to invest more. The company also wants to take over the crumbling infrastructure of London Underground and is in talks with London & Continental

"They have exceeded everyone's expectations with a 30 per cent plus reduction in delays. We are sellers not because of its performance but because it is a regulated utility. If you compare Railtrack with other quoted utilities, it is very expensive. I perceive a real sea-change with the new board showing a very definite emphasis on growth and expansion with talks about investment in the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. But you have to ask whether the former British Rail has the project management expertise to manage projects of that scale."
Wyn Ellis, SBC Werburg Dillon Read.

"Railtrack is performing on a rising trend. Since the Labour Party became a Labour Government, they have taken a more cautious line, as they don't want Railtrack's funding back in the PSBR." Mark McVicar, NatWest Markets.

Railways over a rescue of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link project. The two would cost £10 billion over ten years, a commitment that smacks of bravado to some in government who want improvements to the core network first.

The pressure is on Mr Corbett's team to prove that the private sector, and Railtrack in particular, offers the best solution. More than 90 per cent of the company's staff are ex-BR and Mr Corbett believes that the proportion could fall to 50 per cent in five years in top management and may fall further at lower levels. Not every BR manager warms to the private-sector culture of empowerment, budgets and bottom-line responsibility. "There is a tendency to freeze in the headlights when confronted with economic issues," Mr Corbett remarks.

The economics are moving in Railtrack's favour, with big increases in passenger traffic. However, the good news raises questions just as Mr Swift launches his review of access charges. When the regime was set up, no one dreamt that Railtrack would enjoy real growth in traffic and the prospect of a honeymoon of retail rents at mainline stations. The company's best hope is that the regulator will tighten the screw on the core network but allow better returns on new investment. The reluctant bedfellows of the Government and Railtrack cannot escape each other, a fact Mr Corbett recognises, saying: "If they play it right, the Government will get all the credit for £3 billion of investment in the network by 2001."

Just in time for the next election.

CARL MORTISHED

Ethical expression... 3/10
Fat-cat quotient... 10/10
Financial record... 7/10
Share performance... 7/10
Attitude to employees... 6/10
Strength of brand... 3/10
Innovation... 5/10
Annual report... 8/10
City star rating... 6/10
Future prospects... 8/10

Total... 68/100
Ethical policy is evaluated by *Crucible Works*. The Fat-cat quotient, in which best boardroom pay practices scores highest, is provided by *Crucible Consulting*.

TCI in Windows agreement

FROM TUNKU VARADARAJAN IN NEW YORK

MICROSOFT has reached an agreement with Telecommunications Inc (TCI), America's largest cable television company, to install its Windows operating software in the next generation of "set-top" boxes that the latter will introduce shortly.

Although no terms were announced by either company, it is known that Microsoft had been guaranteed access to at least half of all TCI's new set-top boxes, amounting to about five mil-

lion. The boxes will be deployed next year.

The agreement comes only a day after TCI concluded a similar contract with Sun Microsystems Inc, a bitter competitor of Microsoft.

The deal, under which TCI will include Sun Microsystems' Java programming language in all its new boxes, has been seen as a coup in Sun's war with Microsoft.

The two software companies are wrestling in court over the Java program. At issue is

whether Microsoft can adapt the program to work better with its own software.

The two deals are part of the high-stakes strategy of John Malone, TCI's chairman and chief executive, to keep Microsoft in check in the fast-growing "interactive" market in which set-top boxes will bring hundreds of television channels, Internet access and online banking to homes across America.

Mr Malone's aim is to conclude a web of deals in

which no single software vendor can secure monopoly control of the projected interactive cable industry. He said: "This is an arm's length technology licensing agreement."

On Friday, Mr Malone outlined a vision of the interactive medium that would provoke "impulse consumer behaviour".

He said: "This is Internet meets television so that impulse behaviour can be entered into from the couch instead of the desk."

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	Bank Buys	Bank Sells
Australia \$	2.80	2.42
Austria Sch	21.89	20.03
Belgium Fr	63.67	58.91
Canada S	2.425	2.257
Cyprus Cyp£	0.9063	0.8348
Denmark Kr	11.78	10.89
Finland Mk	9.46	8.71
France Fr	10.31	9.53
Germany DM	3.105	2.883
Greece Dr	491	452
Hong Kong \$	13.38	12.16
Iceland	129	109
Ireland Pt	1.233	1.14
Israel Shk	6.14	5.49
Italy Lit	3067	2825
Japan Yen	227.33	202.80
Malta	0.677	0.618
Netherlands Gld	3.505	3.210
New Zealand \$	2.68	2.74
Norway Kr	12.89	11.75
Portugal Esc	313.03	291.00
S Africa Rd	8.89	7.73
Spain Ptas	280.79	242.00
Sweden Kr	13.73	12.83
Switzerland Fr	2.288	2.221
Turkey Lira	347010	327132
USA \$	1.723	1.580

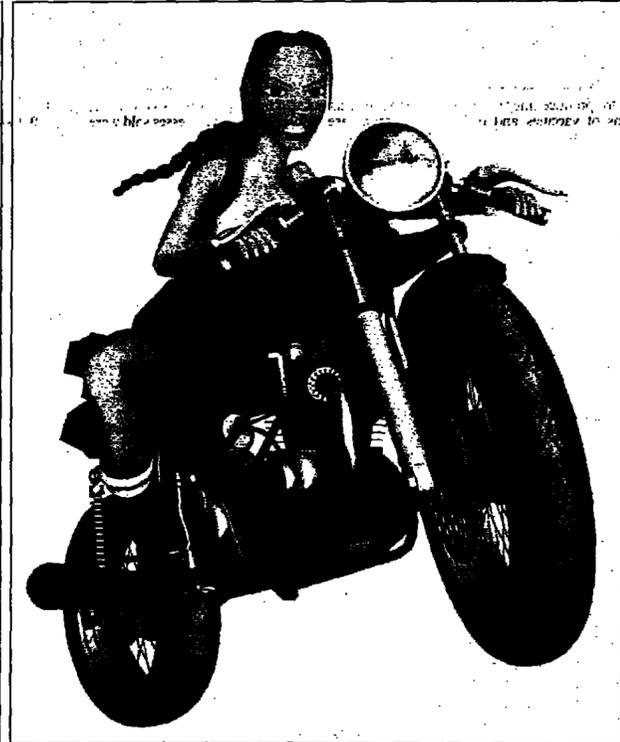
Rates for small denomination banknotes only as supplied by Barclays Bank. Different rates apply to travellers' cheques. Rates as at close of trading on Friday.

CHANGE ON WEEK

US dollar 1.6147 (-0.0258)
German mark 2.9391 (-0.0204)
Exchange index 103.6 (-0.9)
Bank of England official close (4pm)

STOCK MARKET

FT 30 share 3321.8 (-11.1)
FTSE 100 5138.3 (-55.2)
New York Dow Jones 7580.42 (-384.62)
Tokyo Nikkei Avge 14985.10 (Closed)



Sega success: Lara Croft, the computer-enhanced heroine of the Tomb Raider games

Sega to launch new console

BY JASON NISSE

SEGA, the Japanese electronics group, yesterday put a fire under the already competitive computer games market by saying that it would launch a new games console in Europe next year.

The console will replace Sega Saturn, the 32-bit console that has fallen to a distant third in the market place behind Sony PlayStation and Nintendo's Ultra-

64. This is in spite of the success of the *Tomb Raider* series of games, featuring the computer-enhanced heroine Lara Croft, which was originally launched on Sega Saturn.

Sega is hoping that the new platform will put the company back to centre stage in the games market, where its 16-bit console, Megadrive, was a market leader in a large

part of Europe and made the character Sonic the Hedgehog a household name.

The group's woes have not been confined only to the failure of Saturn, games park that it developed at the Trocadero in London's Piccadilly, has suffered from low attendances and its pricing structure has had to be reviewed.

Bairstow to take stand in QMH case

BY DOMINIC WALSH

JOHN BAIRSTOW, the former chairman of Queens Moat Houses, will take the witness stand this week as the case for unfair dismissal being brought by Mr Bairstow and three other former directors returns to the High Court.

The case, which is entering its fourth month, centres on claims by the four men that the debt-ridden hotel group's woes were largely caused by current QMH management. In particular, they claim that the controversial £22 million write-down of its hotel property values in the 1992 accounts effectively allowed the banks to grab control of QMH.

The company rejects such claims, and has spent the past three months detailing what it argues is clear evidence of attempts by former management to create artificial profits through a series of allegedly "sham" transactions.

Among the fascinating details to have emerged from the case was a mooted merger in 1992 between QMH and Mount Charlotte Investments, since renamed Thistle Hotels. The possibility of a merger, which has never previously been made public, came out in cross-examination of Sandy Mortished, formerly managing director of Charterhouse, QMH's then mercantile banking advisers.

It seems that a merger was discussed after Robert Peel, who has recently stepped down as Thistle chief executive, was suggested as a candidate for the chief executive's job at QMH. Discussions are said to have been held with Mr Peel and some of Mount Charlotte's major shareholders over the possibility of merging the two companies under the name Queens Charlotte Hotels.

The case is scheduled to last another three months.

Metered gas charges to be cut

ABOUT one million British Gas customers with pre-payment meters will see their bills fall this year after a deal made with Ofgas, the industry watchdog (Marianne Curphey writes).

Prices for users with prepayment meters, including some of the company's poorest customers, will fall by an average 4 per cent, or £13 a year. In September British Gas Trading (BGT), which is owned by Centrica, announced price cuts for 16 million customers worth about £9

million, but prepayment customers were excluded from the discounts.

Consumer groups have expressed fears that poorer customers were losing out on gas and electricity discounts to the better off, who pay by direct debit.

A spokeswoman for BGT said it was more expensive to supply customers who use prepayment meters. The issue has raised fears that as the domestic gas and electricity markets are opened up to competition, firms will try to cream off

wealthier customers from their rivals. BGT claimed prepayment prices had fallen by more than 30 per cent in real terms over the past 11 years.

Its decision to reduce prices comes ahead of an industry review by Ofgas and follows evidence that some suppliers are charging prepayment customers 40 per cent more than direct debit customers. BGT said it meant that its prices for prepayment customers were amongst the cheapest.

The fear of falling can become a reality

Alan Greenspan has done it again. While our central bankers worry about the intricacies of the money supply and the retail sales figures, the Chairman of the US central bank has set the world's markets alight with talk of the dreaded d-word — deflation. In the process, he sparked speculation that the Fed might even cut interest rates when much of the market still expected it to increase them. But is there a serious prospect that we could see a period of falling prices?

In Japan, land and share prices have been falling since the beginning of the decade, while many industrial countries have experienced falling wholesale prices. In Britain, manufacturers' input costs have been dropping for two years, while output prices are barely rising, and in some sectors are falling. On world markets, the prices of both oil and gold are weak. But what economist would really mean by deflation is a fall in the general level of consumer prices, measured in this country by the

RPI. Japan underwent a mild version of this in 1995 as did Sweden in 1996. For apart from a brief spell in 1959-60, Britain has no experience of deflation since before the war.

For that reason, until recently, most people dismissed it as something of interest only to historians. They are bound to find it extremely interesting, however, because, until the war, far from being a curiosity, deflation was normal. Falling prices alternated with rising prices right up to the eve of our own era. In 1922, the British inflation rate was minus 18 per cent. The result is that over long periods, there was no cumulative rise in prices at all. In 1932, the price level in Britain was about the same as it had been in 1795.

After the war, things were radically different. Prices only ever went up. This is what we

have come to accept as normal, and even inevitable, so it is difficult for us to understand how extraordinary it seemed at the time. It was not what was intended or widely envisaged. It simply emerged from the policy of pursuing very low unemployment in the context of rigid labour markets. And then, just as we had got used to moderate inflation, and economists had found all sorts of reasons to view it as tolerable, inflation took off into the stratosphere. In Britain it peaked at 26.9 per cent in August 1975.

The policymakers swung into action with a vengeance. They threw everything at the conquest of inflation — incomes policies, high interest rates, cuts in borrowing, usually wrapped up in some sophisticated garb, such as targets for the exchange rate, various measures of the money supply or



the inflation rate itself. But in reality, so desperate had the inflationary danger become that their policy was blissfully simple — just get it down! Only recently has their success allowed them to think seriously about precisely what sort of inflation regime they should establish.

Around the world, what they

have decided on is inflation in the 1-3 per cent range, and this is what the markets are coming to believe they will achieve. Cynics will say that this is far too comfortable, and will point to the past record of nasty surprises. Still, it would merely represent a return to the inflation regime that existed in the first twenty-five years after the war.

If then, why not now? But that period was quite distinctive. First, there was no really serious downturn in aggregate demand. Secondly, prices and wages were extremely inflexible downwards, so that they carried on rising even when the economy was in recession.

This is where the Asian crisis comes in. At the very least, it is bound to weaken growth prospects in the developed west, and, if it is badly handled, it has the

capacity to bring on a slump. Meanwhile, the sharp falls in their currencies have reduced the prices at which Asian exporters can sell in Western markets. Yet in both the US and Britain manufacturers have for years been saying that they are unable to raise prices.

In short, they have lost pricing power. If this is how things are in the context of strong demand, what will happen in a downturn, with the Asian tigers cutting the prices of their exports aggressively?

Admittedly, we are not at the point of repeating the inter-war experience of wage cuts, but we are nearer in effect than you might think. Bonuses and profit-related pay can fall, thereby allowing incomes to drop without cuts in "the rate for the job".

So is deflation a real possibility?

I think it is. In many countries in the West inflation is running well below 2 per cent. Even without a drastic fall in world demand, it would not take much to flip these rates over into negative territory. A sharp drop in import prices would do the trick. Zero is not a magic number. If aggregate demand stayed strong, the dip into falling prices would be temporary, but if it slumped, the falls would be extended.

This is less of an immediate prospect in Britain, partly because our starting level of inflation is higher. Yet it cannot be ruled out, and come the next economic downturn falling consumer prices are a real possibility here too. But for me to say this is nothing new, I said it in my book, *The Death of Inflation*, which appeared two years ago. At the time, its warnings about the deflationary danger aroused not criticism but laughter. After the breaking of the Asian crisis, and particularly since Greenspan's remarks, many will now fail to see the joke.

Drug development firm faces contract row

Quadrant in legal fight with founder on compensation

By PAUL DURMAN

The founder of Quadrant Healthcare, which hopes to raise £30 million in a stock market flotation soon, is claiming an estimated £10 million in compensation and damages from the Cambridge drug development company.

Bruce Roser, Quadrant's chief scientific officer until his departure in August 1996, has accused the firm of wrongfully terminating its contract with his Quadrant Research Foundation, a separate organisation whose ideas and discoveries became the company's property.

He claims that the foundation is entitled to payments from Quadrant stretching back a number of years.

Dr Roser's claim is a counter-suit to Quadrant's own legal action. The company fears Dr Roser may attempt to infringe intellectual property rights and is

seeking an injunction to prevent him from so doing.

Jain Ross, Quadrant's chief executive, said that he was confident that the legal battle would not derail the planned flotation.

He added that Nomura International, Quadrant's City adviser, had satisfied itself about the dispute as had RP Scherer and Pall Corporation, two substantial healthcare companies that recently took equity stakes in the firm when they started working with Quadrant on development projects.

Mr Ross said: "Those companies don't make equity investments lightly. They carry out detailed due diligence."

Quadrant's speciality is the sugars that preserve so-called probiotic plants when they are deprived of water. The firm is using a similar principle to produce more stable forms of vaccines and other drugs and to produce

inhalable forms of medicine. Dr Roser still owns nearly 3 per cent of Quadrant, which he started in 1985. Although he was involved in recruiting Mr Ross to Quadrant in 1995 he became unhappy as the new chief executive sought to focus the firm on healthcare, greatly cutting back on the previous diversity of projects.

Mr Ross said that Quadrant had counsel's opinion that it owns the ideas that were produced by Quadrant Research Foundation. The contract with the foundation was terminated only last February, about six months after Dr Roser left.

Mr Ross said that after Dr Roser left "every attempt was made to have a sensible relationship with the research foundation. But it became quite apparent that that was not going to be possible".

Dr Roser was not willing to discuss the case without first consulting his lawyers.

Limelight sells off windows business

By JASON NISSE

LIMELIGHT, the troubled kitchens and bathrooms group, has sold the production side of its Portland Windows business to a former manager for £550,000. The businesses sold have annual sales of more than £4 million.

The group said that it was planning to make some disposals before Christmas, when it emerged that the company's founder, Stephen Bolter, had guaranteed some of Limelight's debts as part of a refinancing agreement.

Limelight's shares have collapsed in the 13 months since it floated, closing on Friday at 34p, less than a fifth of the price at which they were sold to investors. In its brief time on the market the company has undergone a severe management shake-up.

In the deal Limelight is disposing of various assets used for manufacturing windows for Portland to a company called Broach, which is controlled by Alan Williams. He was a director of Portland until he left the group in November and because of his interest the sale will have to be approved by Limelight shareholders.

The losses made by the businesses sold were £882,000 in the six months to June 30.



Terry Venables' role at Portsmouth football club will remain unaffected

Venables may be banned as a director

By JASON NISSE

TERRY VENABLES, the former England football coach, could be banned from being a company director for up to 15 years after a High Court action by the Department of Trade and Industry, that is due to start on Wednesday.

The case revolves around alleged mismanagement of four companies — Tottenham Hotspur, Tottenham Hotspur Football and Athletic Company, its subsidiary that owns the football team, Scribes West, which runs a drinking club, and Edonore, Mr Venables's personal holding company.

Mr Venables is now chairman of Portsmouth, the first division club. He is involved in a power-struggle at Portsmouth with Martin Gregory, who agreed to hand over a 51 per cent controlling interest in the club to Mr Venables for £1 in August 1996 but has since accused him of failing to fulfil his side of the deal.

Nick Trainer, Mr Venables's solicitor, said: "I am still hopeful that the case will be settled without the need to go to court. I hope that Mr Venables will not be disqualified, but even if he is, it will not stop him from continuing with any of his jobs. He does not have to be a director for most of what he does at Portsmouth."

1997/98 High	1997/98 Low	1997/98 Mid cap (million)	Price range	Why +/-	YTD %	P/E	1997/98 High	1997/98 Low	1997/98 Mid cap (million)	Price range	Why +/-	YTD %	P/E	1997/98 High	1997/98 Low	1997/98 Mid cap (million)	Price range	Why +/-	YTD %	P/E
130	100	12.80	100-120	...	...	...	120	90	11.00	90-110	...	...	...	110	80	10.00	80-100	...	...	...
135	105	13.50	105-125	...	...	...	125	95	11.50	95-115	...	...	...	115	85	10.50	85-105	...	...	...
140	110	14.20	110-130	...	...	...	130	100	12.00	100-120	...	...	...	120	90	11.00	90-110	...	...	...
145	115	14.90	115-135	...	...	...	135	105	12.50	105-125	...	...	...	125	95	11.50	95-115	...	...	...
150	120	15.60	120-140	...	...	...	140	110	13.00	110-130	...	...	...	130	100	12.00	100-120	...	...	...
155	125	16.30	125-145	...	...	...	145	115	13.50	115-135	...	...	...	135	105	12.50	105-125	...	...	...
160	130	17.00	130-150	...	...	...	150	120	14.00	120-140	...	...	...	140	110	13.00	110-130	...	...	...
165	135	17.70	135-155	...	...	...	155	125	14.50	125-145	...	...	...	145	115	13.50	115-135	...	...	...
170	140	18.40	140-160	...	...	...	160	130	15.00	130-150	...	...	...	150	120	14.00	120-140	...	...	...
175	145	19.10	145-165	...	...	...	165	135	15.50	135-155	...	...	...	155	125	14.50	125-145	...	...	...
180	150	19.80	150-170	...	...	...	170	140	16.00	140-160	...	...	...	160	130	15.00	130-150	...	...	...
185	155	20.50	155-175	...	...	...	175	145	16.50	145-165	...	...	...	165	135	15.50	135-155	...	...	...
190	160	21.20	160-180	...	...	...	180	150	17.00	150-170	...	...	...	170	140	16.00	140-160	...	...	...
195	165	21.90	165-185	...	...	...	185	155	17.50	155-175	...	...	...	175	145	16.50	145-165	...	...	...
200	170	22.60	170-190	...	...	...	190	160	18.00	160-180	...	...	...	180	150	17.00	150-170	...	...	...
205	175	23.30	175-195	...	...	...	195	165	18.50	165-185	...	...	...	185	155	17.50	155-175	...	...	...
210	180	24.00	180-200	...	...	...	200	170	19.00	170-190	...	...	...	190	160	18.00	160-180	...	...	...
215	185	24.70	185-205	...	...	...	205	175	19.50	175-195	...	...	...	195	165	18.50	165-185	...	...	...
220	190	25.40	190-210	...	...	...	210	180	20.00	180-200	...	...	...	200	170	19.00	170-190	...	...	...
225	195	26.10	195-215	...	...	...	215	185	20.50	185-205	...	...	...	205	175	19.50	175-195	...	...	...
230	200	26.80	200-220	...	...	...	220	190	21.00	190-210	...	...	...	210	180	20.00	180-200	...	...	...
235	205	27.50	205-225	...	...	...	225	195	21.50	195-215	...	...	...	215	185	20.50	185-205	...	...	...
240	210	28.20	210-230	...	...	...	230	200	22.00	200-220	...	...	...	220	190	21.00	190-210	...	...	...
245	215	28.90	215-235	...	...	...	235	205	22.50	205-225	...	...	...	225	195	21.50	195-215	...	...	...
250	220	29.60	220-240	...	...	...	240	210	23.00	210-230	...	...	...	230	200	22.00	200-220	...	...	...
255	225	30.30	225-245	...	...	...	245	215	23.50	215-235	...	...	...	235	205	22.50	205-225	...	...	...
260	230	31.00	230-250	...	...	...	250	220	24.00	220-240	...	...	...	240	210	23.00	210-230	...	...	...
265	235	31.70	235-255	...	...	...	255	225	24.50	225-245	...	...	...	245	215	23.50	215-235	...	...	...
270	240	32.40	240-260	...	...	...	260	230	25.00	230-250	...	...	...	250	220	24.00	220-240	...	...	...
275	245	33.10	245-265	...	...	...	265	235	25.50	235-255	...	...	...	255	225	24.50	225-245	...	...	...
280	250	33.80	250-270	...	...	...	270	240	26.00	240-260	...	...	...	260	230	25.00	230-250	...	...	...
285	255	34.50	255-275	...	...	...	275	245	26.50	245-265	...	...	...	265	235	25.50	235-255	...	...	...
290	260	35.20	260-280	...	...	...	280	250	27.00	250-270	...	...	...	270	240	26.00	240-260	...	...	...
295	265	35.90	265-285	...	...	...	285	255	27.50	255-275	...	...	...	275	245	26.50	245-265	...	...	...
300	270	36.60	270-290	...	...	...	290	260	28.00	260-280	...	...	...	280	250	27.00	250-270	...	...	...
305	275	37.30	275-295	...	...	...	295	265	28.50	265-285	...	...	...	285	255	27.50	255-275	...	...	...
310	280	38.00	280-300	...	...	...	300	270	29.00	270-290	...	...	...	290	260	28.00	260-280	...	...	...
315	285	38.70	285-305	...	...	...	305	275	29.50	275-295	...	...	...	295	265	28.50	265-285	...	...	...
320	290	39.40	290-310	...	...	...	310	280	30.00	280-300	...	...	...	300	270	29.00	270-290	...	...	...
325	295	40.10	295-315	...	...	...	315	285	30.50	285-305	...	...	...	305	275	29.50	275-295	...	...	...
330	300	40.80	300-320	...	...	...	320	290	31.00	290-310	...	...	...	310	280	30.00	280-300	...	...	...
335	305	41.50	305-325	...	...	...	325	295	31.50	295-315	...	...	...	315	285	30.50	285-305	...	...	...
340	310	42.20	310-330	...	...	...	330	300	32.00	300-320	...	...	...	320	290	31.00	290-310	...	...	...
345	315	42.90	315-335	...	...	...	335	305	32.50	305-325	...	...	...	325	295	31.50	295-315	...	...	...
350	320	43.60	320-340	...	...	...	340	310	33.00	310-330	...	...	...	330	300	32.00	300-320	...	...	...

Booking in at Claridge's

RAMON PAJARES, managing director of the Savoy Group, has appointed Seamus McManus general manager of Claridge's, one of four luxury London hotels (Dorchester, Claridge's, The Langham and the Grosvenor). The appointment, to be announced today, follows the sudden departure late last year of Francois Touzin.

Mr McManus has spent the last six years with Mandarin Oriental as general manager of its flagship hotel in Hong Kong and more recently as vice-president of Mandarin Oriental Holdings USA.

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Partnership can win us Far Eastern prizes

Margaret Beckett on opportunities for Britain as trade links develop

My visit to China and the Prime Minister's to Japan come at a key time in Britain's relationship with the Far East. Both the Prime Minister and I are taking the same message to business leaders in the region. Britain is changing. We are building a modern Britain, with a stable economy and an end to boom and bust. We have cut corporation tax to the lowest level in Europe. I will be introducing, a little later this year, proposals that will make clear our belief in fairness at the workplace. That includes minimum rights and a minimum wage.

And, most importantly, the new Labour Government is beginning to develop a new way of working with business, steering a middle path between interference and indifference. It is only through partnership that the Government can help business to help itself. The end result is a regained confidence in our ability to compete abroad. One of the first examples of such partnership was the Export Forum. We asked business to say where it saw the most opportunities for business so that the Government could target its efforts in areas where a real difference could be made.

China was identified as one such opportunity. We are not starting from scratch. We are, by a long way, the largest investor in China. In Shanghai alone, our investment stands at more than the total of all French, German and Italian investment. This shows British companies' long-term commitment to China and the scale of contribution that they are making to the development of China's economy. These investments cover a



British fashion designers, such as Paul Smith, are even more popular in Tokyo than they are in Paris

very wide spectrum, from pharmaceuticals to oxygen and from ice-cream to toothpaste to chemicals.

But we can and we must do more. Although British investment in China is strong, the levels of direct trade investment have been less impressive. Even though British direct exports to China went up by more than 20 per cent last year, there is still much more that we can do. That effort starts now. In particular, I believe that there are real opportunities for small and medium-size enterprises, either by exploiting niche markets for their products or technologies or by working with larger companies. The second formal meeting of the

Sino-UK Joint Commission, which I chair today with my opposite number, Madam Wu Yi, will focus on areas such as this.

Above all, we must look to the long term. That is the watchword of this Government's approach to competitiveness in all its components. The success of our relationship with Japan shows the benefits that can arise from a bilateral trade and investment relationship that has developed and matured over time.

British software writers produce computer games for the Japanese market. British pop music is played in Japanese clubs, and our fashion

designers, such as Paul Smith, are even more popular in Tokyo than in Paris. The Rack, HMV and The Body Shop are just some of the retailers with a permanent presence in the Japanese high street, and, from the end of the month, BP will be opening a range of service stations.

For their part, Japanese companies have now invested £20 billion in the UK. The names of Sony, Toyota and Honda are as well known here as our own big companies. Such firms have helped to transform key industries by introducing new technology, new working practices and new management. More than 270 Japanese companies manufacture

in the UK — but, more significantly, more than 140 Japanese companies have decided to do their leading-edge research and development in Britain. This kind of investment is more than welcome. It is a vital part of our efforts to build a modern Britain.

The real compliment to our strengths, though, comes when a major company chooses to expand in the UK. Last week's announcement by Toyota of such an expansion was a tribute to the dynamism and strength of our economy, and a recognition that Britain is a country at ease with itself at home and abroad, and at the centre of affairs in Europe and in the wider world. It is a vote of confidence in the policies of this Government.

It will not be long before China's enterprises are ready to compete globally, and when they do I want the UK to be considered the natural gateway to Europe. I will be opening two Invest in Britain seminars to help British firms during my trip. Our presidency of the European Union will help to build a stronger Europe and a stronger role for Britain in Europe — an attractive base when China and other countries look beyond their borders.

The Far East remains one of the greatest challenges to be met by British business if we are to become one of the fastest-moving economies in a global marketplace that is offering newer and bigger opportunities to those prepared to exploit them. This Government will work with all businesses, large and small, to achieve their aims.

The author is President of the Board of Trade

WORD WATCHES

Answers from page 37

HILARIA
(d) A festival in honour of Cybele, celebrated at the vernal equinox. The Latin neuter plural of *hilaris*, 'The hilaria were either private or public. Among the former the day on which a person married, and on which a son was born; among the latter, those days of public rejoicings appointed by a new emperor.'

MOUSSEUX
(c) Sparkling or a sparkling wine. The French word. 'Not one of the mousseux, méthode champenoise, or gazifiés possesses the clean, hard, fizzy taste of champagne.'

NORK
(a) Australian slang for a woman's breast. Derived from the Norko Co-operative Ltd, a better manufacturer in New South Wales. 'Hello, honey, that sweater — one deep breath and your norks will be in my soup.'

HALUTZIM
(a) Jewish pioneers entering Palestine in order to build up their future national home. The Hebrew word. 'Tel Aviv is the headquarters of the Rutenberg Company and also of a number of co-operative building societies run by young Jewish halutzim pioneers.'

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Youngsters on the catwalk

Babewatch
ITV, 8.30pm
The latest addition to the burgeoning genre of documentary soap focuses on a top London model agency and the progress of its young hopefuls. We start at the *Clothes Show* in Birmingham where the agency's scouts are busy trying to spot new talent. With 250,000 visitors the show is prime recruiting territory and likely candidates are invited to enter a catwalk competition. Scout Sarah explains that it is not always the obvious girls who make it but often the shy little ones, with no make-up, who have come with their mums. Lucy, 14, and Tessa, 15, are high on Sarah's list and we are due to meet them again. Another recurring character is Vernon, a 23-year-old who used to repair payphones before modelling beckoned. Back in Lancashire, his parents are still getting over their surprise.



Jenny McCrindle co-stars (BBC2, 9pm)

Looking After Jo Jo
BBC2, 9.00pm
Frank Deacy's four-part drama about crime, drugs and Aids in Edinburgh in the 1980s may turn out to be one of those projects it is easier to admire than warm to. It is not just the grim subject-matter, unrelieved by any but the most desperate humour. The bigger difficulty is asking us to empathise with a central character who has few redeeming features. Jo Jo played with his usual presence by Robert Carlyle is a small-time crook who becomes a bigger one as he switches from stealing cigarettes to dealing drugs. He is haunted by the early and unexplained loss of his father, though we are left waiting to discover whether this is the key to his life of crime. The piece is tightly written (though non-Scots may have trouble with the brogue) and atmospherically directed by John Mackenzie of *The Long Good Friday*. It is still hard to like.

Heroes of Comedy
Channel 4, 9.00pm
Although he is remembered for routines in which he chased young women with few clothes on, Benny Hill was not sexist. At least that is what Barry Took says in the latest of John Fisher's affectionate profiles of comic greats, and so does

Caroline (Mrs Merton) Ahearne. It is even argued that the shows were more anti-man than anti-woman. Five years after Hill's death, and with political correctness starting to get itself a bad name, such revisionism was inevitable. But you do not have to agree and in any case there was much more to Hill than ogling crumpet. The film recalls his gift for impersonation. In the black and white days, he played an entire panel of *Juke Box Jury*, plus the chairman. We also see that wonderful striptease in which Hill passes himself down to a skeleton before making each bone disappear.

Face to Face
BBC2, 11.15pm
A format which once had grown men breaking down in public has become less confrontational under Sir Jeremy Isaacs, though the encounters can still be revealing. Ben Elton kicks off the new series and if Sir Jeremy sends him to talk on it is very good, crisp, articulate and relevant. In the course of it Elton explains his "moral" approach to comedy, the rival attractions of writing and performing and how far his stage act is watered down for television. Elton's family background (his grand parents were Czechoslovak academics who fled to Britain by way of Prague) is intriguing for those who like to spot influences, though Elton himself is disinclined to play the game. In any case it hardly explains his passion for saving the environment. Peter Waymark.

RADIO CHOICE

Empire
Radio 4, 8.45pm
The start of a four-part series which has a millennial feel to it, as does much other BBC programming over the past year and the next two. Peter Jay is the BBC's economics editor and he has travelled to all corners of the globe for a series which seeks to describe the rise and fall of the British Empire and the legacy it has left behind. It starts with former leaders in Canada, the USA, the Caribbean, southern Africa and the Indian subcontinent and the programmes will use material from private aural histories which have not been broadcast before. The first programme starts with Jay among the former glories of Bristol docks, from where many of the empire builders set sail and to which much of their bounty was returned.

Dreams Teams
Radio 5 Live, 7.30pm
Kenneth Clarke seems to be having the time of his life since he gave up looking after the nation's money. He has been especially active in radio and tonight he pops up again in the first of a series that will have instant appeal for anyone who supports a football team but whose attractiveness will be a complete mystery to everyone else. The object of the exercise is for the guests, in this case Clarke, to choose a dream team from all the players who have played for the club they support, in this case Nottingham Forest. I suspect there will be just as much fun to be had from hearing Clarke name the worst players to turn out for Forest. Frank Warren and Steve Cram appear as selectors later in the series. Peter Barnard

RADIO 1

6.30am Kevin Greening and Zoë Ball 8.00 Simon Mayo 12.00 Jo Whitey, includes 12.30pm Newsweek 2.00 Mark Radcliffe 4.00 David Pearson, includes 5.45 Newsbeat 6.30 Evening Session, includes music from Black Grape 8.30 Live Music Update with Rigby Smiles 8.40 Andy Kershaw 10.30 Mary Anne Hobbs 1.00am Chris Wrenn 4.00 Chris Moyles

RADIO 2

6.00am Sarah Kennedy 7.30 Wake Up to Wogan 9.30 Ken Bruce 11.30 Jimmy Young 1.30pm Debbie Doble 3.00 Ed Stewart 5.00 Johnnie Walker 7.00 Humphrey Lyttelton 8.00 Mellow Yellow 9.00 Eamonn Andrews 9.30 Big Band, under Barry Forgie 8.30 Hayes Over Britain 10.00 Richard Atkinson 12.05am Steve Madden 3.00 Alex Lester

RADIO 3

6.00am The Breakfast Programme 8.00 Nicky Campbell 12.00 Middy with Mar 2.00pm Russco on Five 4.00 Nationwide with Ian Payne 7.00 News Extra Sport and classified racing results 7.30 Dream Teams. See Choice 8.00 The Monday Match: St Johnstone v Heart of Midlothian Scottish Premier Division 10.00 News Talk 11.00 News Extra 12.00 After Hours 2.00am Up All Night with Rhod Sharp 5.00 Morning Reports

RADIO 4

6.00am The Breakfast Programme 8.00 Nicky Campbell 12.00 Middy with Mar 2.00pm Russco on Five 4.00 Nationwide with Ian Payne 7.00 News Extra Sport and classified racing results 7.30 Dream Teams. See Choice 8.00 The Monday Match: St Johnstone v Heart of Midlothian Scottish Premier Division 10.00 News Talk 11.00 News Extra 12.00 After Hours 2.00am Up All Night with Rhod Sharp 5.00 Morning Reports

RADIO 5

6.00am The Breakfast Programme 8.00 Nicky Campbell 12.00 Middy with Mar 2.00pm Russco on Five 4.00 Nationwide with Ian Payne 7.00 News Extra Sport and classified racing results 7.30 Dream Teams. See Choice 8.00 The Monday Match: St Johnstone v Heart of Midlothian Scottish Premier Division 10.00 News Talk 11.00 News Extra 12.00 After Hours 2.00am Up All Night with Rhod Sharp 5.00 Morning Reports

RADIO 5 LIVE

6.00am The Breakfast Programme 8.00 Nicky Campbell 12.00 Middy with Mar 2.00pm Russco on Five 4.00 Nationwide with Ian Payne 7.00 News Extra Sport and classified racing results 7.30 Dream Teams. See Choice 8.00 The Monday Match: St Johnstone v Heart of Midlothian Scottish Premier Division 10.00 News Talk 11.00 News Extra 12.00 After Hours 2.00am Up All Night with Rhod Sharp 5.00 Morning Reports

VIRGIN RADIO

5.00am Jeremy Clark 7.00 The Chris Evans Breakfast Show 10.00 Robb Baker 1.00pm Nick Abbot 4.00 Mark Forster 7.00 (FM) Paul Coyte (AM) Colin Jones 10.00 Janey Lee Grace 2.00am Richard Porter

CLASSIC FM

6.00am Alan Marr, includes the School Run Request and Breakfast Baroque 8.00 Henry Kelly, includes Hall of Fame Hour, Classic Masterpieces, Record of the Week and a recipe for Japanese Miso Soup 12.00 Lunchtime Requests, introduced by Jane Jones 2.00pm Concerto, Beethoven (Mozart Concerto in D major) 3.00 Jamie Crook, includes Continuous Classics and Afternoon Romance 6.30 Newsnight 7.00 Smooth Classics, presented by John Burtyn 8.00 Evening Concert, Rhapsody in G major, Liszt (Suite No. 3), de Falla (The Three Corners), Bartok (Adagio for Strings) 10.00 Michael Maguire, includes at 11.30 Nocturne 2.00am Concerto, 3.00 Mark Griffiths

RADIO 3

6.00am On Air, with Andrew McGregor, includes Handel (Suite No 5 in E, Harmonious Blacksmith); Mussorgsky (Dawn over the Moscow River) 9.00 Afternoon, with Peter Hoadley, includes Brahms (Waltzes, Op. 39); Debussy, transcr. Stokowski (La Cathédrale Engloutie) 10.30 Artist of the Week: Neville Martinfer, Joan Bakewell presents a week of programmes profiling the week's best and worst conductor 11.00 Sound Stories, Richard Baker explores the development of the French style in music 12.00 On the Move, the weekly Bohemian Martini 1.00pm The Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert, Live from St John's, Smith Square in London, Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet, Ligeti (Six Bagatelles); Heitor (Wind Quintet); Barber (Symphony No. 1); Hindemith (Kleine Kammermusik Op. 24 No 2) 2.00 The BBC Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, includes Ginie (Overture: Rustan and Lullaby), under David Atherton 4.00 Music Masters, with Ian Hewitt (1) 4.45 Music Machine, Verity Sharp looks at the way jazz combines with or is influenced by other genres of music 5.00 In Tune, a week of programmes marking the centenary of Lewis Carroll's death. Sean Rafferty explores the musical madness of Alice in Wonderland. Live Music includes Mozart's Horn Concerto No 4 and Sir Charles Mackerras talks about his new recording of Janacek's Ksta Kobanova 7.30 A Tribute to Sir Michael Tippett, An evening of programmes celebrating the work of the

RADIO 4

6.00am On Air, with Andrew McGregor, includes Handel (Suite No 5 in E, Harmonious Blacksmith); Mussorgsky (Dawn over the Moscow River) 9.00 Afternoon, with Peter Hoadley, includes Brahms (Waltzes, Op. 39); Debussy, transcr. Stokowski (La Cathédrale Engloutie) 10.30 Artist of the Week: Neville Martinfer, Joan Bakewell presents a week of programmes profiling the week's best and worst conductor 11.00 Sound Stories, Richard Baker explores the development of the French style in music 12.00 On the Move, the weekly Bohemian Martini 1.00pm The Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert, Live from St John's, Smith Square in London, Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet, Ligeti (Six Bagatelles); Heitor (Wind Quintet); Barber (Symphony No. 1); Hindemith (Kleine Kammermusik Op. 24 No 2) 2.00 The BBC Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, includes Ginie (Overture: Rustan and Lullaby), under David Atherton 4.00 Music Masters, with Ian Hewitt (1) 4.45 Music Machine, Verity Sharp looks at the way jazz combines with or is influenced by other genres of music 5.00 In Tune, a week of programmes marking the centenary of Lewis Carroll's death. Sean Rafferty explores the musical madness of Alice in Wonderland. Live Music includes Mozart's Horn Concerto No 4 and Sir Charles Mackerras talks about his new recording of Janacek's Ksta Kobanova 7.30 A Tribute to Sir Michael Tippett, An evening of programmes celebrating the work of the

RADIO 5

5.55am (LW) Shipping Forecast 6.30 News Briefing 6.10 Farming Today 6.25 Prayer for the Day 6.30 Today 8.45 Beyond the Millennium, a new series in which six visionary thinkers tell Shreeva McDonald what life will be like in the year 2010. Today the American academic Chris Hables Gray predicts a gloomy future 8.58 Weather 9.00 News 9.05 Start the Week, with the Times columnist Melvin Bragg and guests 10.00 (FM) News: Big Bang, Jez Nelson investigates new ways to look at the human heart 10.00 (LW) News: Daily Service 10.15 (LW) On These Days, Kate Saunders celebrates the fortieth anniversary of Bunty magazine 10.30 Woman's Hour, introduced by Jenni Murray 11.30 Money Box Live, a roundup of the latest personal finance news 12.00 News; You and Yours, consumer news and current affairs with Mark Whitaker 12.25am Counterpoint, The general knowledge music quiz hosted by Neil Smith 12.55 Weather 1.00 The World at One, with Nick Clarke 1.40 The Archers (1) 1.55 Shipping Forecast 2.00 News 2025, The conclusion of Mike Waller's humorous serial, with Alphonse Emmerault, Mona Harcourt, Daniela Nardin and David Yip 3.00 News; The Afternoon Shift, with Louise Taylor 4.00 News 4.05 Kaleidoscope, MW 645, LW 198 (1.45-5.55am) CLASSIC FM, FM 100-102, VIRGIN RADIO, FM 105.8; MW 1197, 1215, TALKRADIO, MW 1063, 1089. Television and radio listings compiled by Peter Dear, Ian Hughes, Rosemary Smith, Susan Thomson, Jane Gregory and John McNamee.

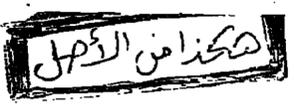
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BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

MONDAY JANUARY 12 1998

NatWest offer to EMI chief

By MARIANNE CURPHEY

NATWEST GROUP has approached Sir Colin Southgate, chairman of EMI, to invite him to become chairman-designate to succeed Lord Alexander of Weedon in just under 18 months' time.

The issue of succession at the troubled high street banking group will be under discussion today as Lord Alexander returns from holiday in Barbados.

NatWest, where Derek Wanless is group chief executive, has faced pressure from institutional investors to restructure the group and last year announced the sale of part of NatWest Markets, its investment banking arm.

Sir Colin stepped down as chairman of PowerGen in 1996 and would be able to take on the NatWest job without reducing his commitment to EMI.

NatWest is also believed to have approached Sir Clive Thompson, chairman of Rentokil, and Sir Andrew Large, recently retired chairman of the Securities and Investments Board.

The Royal Opera House meets today to vote on Sir Colin's appointment as chairman. He was also in the running for the chairmanship of Channel 4, which last week went to Yanni Treves, the senior partner at Macfarlanes, the City law firm.

Opera post, page 3

Hong Kong plea for calm over Peregrine

By JANET BUSH ECONOMICS EDITOR

DONALD TSANG, Hong Kong's Financial Secretary, yesterday appealed for calm in the territory after a deal to inject vital new capital into Peregrine Investments, one of Asia's largest investment banks, collapsed on Friday.

Mr Tsang, speaking against a background of speculation that the Hong Kong stock market could go into freefall today, said: "I believe everybody understands that the Peregrine event has been simmering for a long time. I think the news has been much digested in the market. I hope the market's reaction will be rational."

Peregrine was holding talks with potential investors yesterday in a fight for survival that could make or break confidence in Hong Kong. News that its deal with Zurich Centre Investments had fallen through sent the Hang Seng index plunging on Friday to 8,894.04, its lowest close since May, 1995.

The selling of Hong Kong stocks continued in London after banks in the territory were forced to raise prime rates 75 percentage points to 10.25 per cent, a larger increase than the markets had been expecting.

The Hang Seng London reference index fell nearly six per cent, suggesting more heavy selling is imminent.

David Carse, deputy head of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, said that Peregrine's difficulties should not have a knock-on effect on other banks. But Philip Tose, Peregrine Chairman, predicted that the Hang Seng could slump to 7,000 today.

Jim Mellon, chairman of Regent Pacific Group, the Hong Kong based emerging markets investment house, said the Hang Seng could fall to as low



A Peregrine official said the firm's survival would depend on whether it could secure capital from new investors

as 4,000 before it found a floor. He predicted that Hong Kong would have to abandon its 14-year-old currency peg against the US dollar.

Several fund managers interviewed for the latest Global Emerging Market Survey by Burson-Marsteller, published today, said that a devaluation of the Hong Kong dollar could not be ruled out.

Such speculation was vigorously countered by Anson Chan, Chief Secretary of Hong Kong. She denied ru-

mours that the peg was being re-examined and called for steady nerves and cool heads.

An unnamed Peregrine official said on Friday that the firm's survival would depend on whether it could secure capital from new investors.

Peregrine's highly successful business has been brought low as Asian markets have collapsed. The firm said in October that net profits from its equity products business had fallen from \$39 million in the first six months of 1997 to

\$16 million over the first ten months. In November, the firm laid off 275 of its 2,000 staff worldwide.

Last month, Francis Leung, Peregrine's managing director, said that the firm had no specific need for new funds but that the Asian crisis had meant that liquidity was tight and that it would be helpful to have more capital. The speculation now is that Peregrine was heavily exposed to Indonesia whose markets collapsed last week.

The Burson-Marsteller survey showed that fund managers' sentiment towards emerging markets had plunged since the start of the Asian crisis in June. Only half of the 35 fund managers questioned remain positive about emerging markets, compared with 80 per cent in the third quarter. Sentiment towards South East Asia hit a new low. Only Taiwan continues to attract optimism.

Rescue doubts, page 10

Boots plans to put medical records on storecards

By JASON NISSE

THE prospect of customers at Boots the Chemist being told of special offers deals when they go to collect their prescriptions is being investigated by the retailer.

Boots wants to capitalise on the success of its Advantage loyalty card to combine it with the Medilink card that it issues to customers who buy prescriptions at its shops.

Medilink carries medical records, such as allergies and existing medication, and allows the pharmacists at Boots to be aware of any potential problems they might have with drug prescriptions being filled.

The Advantage card carries a silicon chip that stores up to 80 megabytes of information - much more than is needed to run the existing loyalty scheme, which offers discounts to Boots the Chemist customers of up to 4 per cent.

All the Medilink information could be stored on the Advantage card - the chip is sophisticated enough for the two sets of information to be stored completely separately on one card.

This would allow staff at Boots to swipe the card through one electronic reader to check the medical information and through another, which would allow them to tell the customer of any special offers in products bought previously at the stores.

"Technically it is possible and it is something we are considering," Ian Wright, director of communications at Boots the Chemist, said. "The speed at which we resolve the ethical issues is what will drive any launch."

The Medilink card is run in conjunction with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain and approved by the Department of Health.

The Royal Society is concerned about the use of any of the information commercially. Boots the Chemist is at pains not to cause any anxiety and will have to show that the two cards can be combined without there being any ethical problems.

The retailer is delighted

with the success of its Advantage card, which has beaten all internal projections since its launch last year. The company had aimed to issue at least four million cards by Christmas, and eight million by next September. It had received five million applications by the end of November and is expected soon to announce the issue of its six millionth card.

Data from the card has also shown that Boots the Chemist customers regularly purchase goods from more than one till while in the stores.

All change for estate agencies

By MARIANNE CURPHEY

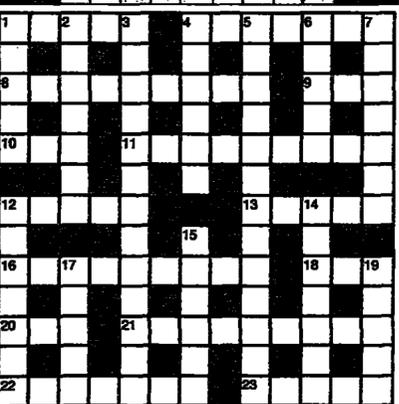
TWO of Britain's biggest estate agencies could soon be under new ownership. Lloyds TSB is conducting a review of its Black Horse Agencies and Woolwich is understood to have made overtures to buy Hambro Countrywide.

Lloyds TSB said yesterday that it had yet to make a decision on the future of the 372-branch business, but confirmed a review was "being carried out at present". Options include a trade sale or management buyout, with the operation valued at £50 million.

Woolwich has made an informal approach to Hambro Countrywide, Britain's biggest estate agency partly owned by Hambros, which last month announced the £300 million sale of its banking side.

Woolwich and Hambro Countrywide are not yet in talks and any decision on the estate agency business is likely to be delayed until Hambros problems are resolved.

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD



No 1300

- ACROSS: 1 Husks; banter (5) 4 With unfounded hope (7) 8 Failure to follow correct line (9) 9 Waves; a wit (5) 10 Hurry; a cricket score (3) 11 See (9) 12 (Played) without a score (2,3) 13 Be evasive; (engine) cut out (5) 16 Really enjoy oneself (4,1,4) 18 A share; slight wound (3) 20 Song; appearance (3) 21 Month of Robespierre's fall (9) 22 When Solomon Grundy christened (7) 23 Wel-h town; below (5)

- SOLUTION TO NO 1299 ACROSS: 4 Super 7 Anarchic 8 Clawp 9 Reprach 10 Betrav 13 Biter 14 Remote 15 Snorer 18 Scrutiny 19 Puck 20 Dionys 21 Clyde

- DOWN: 1 Damage 2 Hamper 3 Scurv 4 Scorpion 5 Pilaster 6 Rasher 11 Ternery 12 Aptitude 14 Rustic 15 Saying 16 Oppose 17 Excess

- SOLUTION TO NEW YEAR'S DAY JUMBO CROSSWORD ACROSS: 1 Hypochondriac 8 Philanthropic 15 Barmaid 16 Walkabout 17 Takes five 18 Repel 19 Assigning 20 Snappedragons 21 If the worst comes to the worst 25 Nature trail 27 Hacienda 28 Naomi 31 Hacking 33 Inscire 35 Beersheba 36 Get-together 38 Lighten 40 Open-air 42 Picasso 43 Aintree 44 Impatiently 45 Infection 47 Cricketer 49 Omined 51 Salon 52 Nobleman 54 Driving test 58 All Baba and the Forty Thieves 61 Franchisee 63 Neologist 65 Sonne 68 Upraiser 69 Criticise 68 Eternal 69 Nuclear weapon 70 Overstretched.

- DOWN: 1 Hibernian 2 Peripatetic 3 Charlie 4 Odd man out 5 Downs 6 Illogical 7 Charisma 8 Ploughshare 9 Ictus 10 Astrakhan 11 Take down a peg or two 12 Restaurants 13 Paid out 14 Crease 22 Spanish Main 23 Oliver Twist 24 Disarrayed 26 Rains 29 Overcast 30 Angler 31 High priest 32 Gregorian calendar 34 Spring-clean 35 Bonapartist 37 Tactful 39 Greeks 41 Evening 46 Considerate 48 Inattention 50 Twelvemonth 53 Brasserie 54 Doodnise 55 In the rear 56 Tasselied 57 Geronimo 58 Aerobic 59 Inspect 60 Upturn 62 Recap 64 Items.

Growth tipped for troublespots

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA is set to be the fastest growing economy in the world this year, expanding by 35 per cent courtesy of post-war reconstruction, according to The Economist Intelligence Unit (Janet Bush writes).

Three out of four of the countries at the top of the growth league are bouncing back from war or civil unrest. Second, with expected growth of 12 per cent, is Albania, which deteriorated into near-civil war last year when pyramid deposit-taking schemes collapsed.

Angola, in fourth position with forecast growth of 9.5 per cent, returned to power the former military ruler of the Congo last October and Unita rebels have been in temporary retreat. Angola has just discovered a huge new offshore oilfield and oil accounts for almost 90 per cent of export earnings.

Georgia, relatively peaceful despite conflict in Abkhazia, is third with expected growth of 10 per cent through privatisation and corporate restructuring. China has been pushed down to fifth place with expected growth of 8 per cent.

PFI go-ahead for hospital

By JASON NISSE

ONE of the most important projects in the Government's Private Finance Initiative - the £214 million Norfolk & Norwich Hospital - was approved yesterday, two-and-a-half years after work started on financing the scheme.

The project, the first greenfield hospital financed by private funds, is being built by a consortium led by Laing Group and backed by Bar-

clays Capital. Three other National Health Service PFI projects have been approved by Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, and another ten "priority" schemes are expected to be given the green light.

The schemes were held up by their complexity, the structure of PFI and a concern in the City that NHS trusts may be acting ultra vires by taking on debt obligations in PFI. A

change in the law resolved the vires issue. James Alexander, finance director of Laing, said: "The last Government was unrealistic and slow to respond to the practical problems in these deals."

Norfolk & Norwich also had to overcome last summer's withdrawal of General Healthcare, its facilities management partner, which has now been replaced by Serco.

Operators to blame for delays, says Railtrack

By ARTHUR LEATHLEY, TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

RAILTRACK, which runs the stations, signalling and track on Britain's railways, has told regulators that the train operators are to blame for the network's worsening performance.

Rail industry statistics indicate that delays caused by the 25 operating companies, rather than Railtrack, have risen substantially over the past year.

Figures obtained by The Times confirm the fall in operators' performance, sug-

gesting a 17 per cent increase in the amount of delay attributable to the train companies over the first quarter of last year. The confidential statistics, submitted to John Swift, the rail regulator, also indicate a shift in the "blame-rate" between Railtrack and the operators.

Railtrack was responsible for 71 per cent of passenger train delays at the start of privatisation two years ago, but that figure has fallen to 60 per cent, while delays attributable to train operators have risen accordingly from 29 per cent to 40 per cent.

The worst-performing companies, which ran more than a fifth of trains late, were Great Eastern, which offers commuter services from Essex and Suffolk, Connex South Eastern in Kent, and Virgin West Coast, running services from Scotland to London. Great Eastern ran only 63 per cent of peak-time trains on time in the month to December 6.

The track and signalling company is about to respond to concern about worsening punctuality by appointing a performance director to improve the standard of service across the network.

Brian Mellitt, Railtrack's engineering director, admits that last year's sharp improvement took the industry by surprise. "We have done well to sustain that improvement, but now we have to make sure that the best practice in one of the seven zones is passed on."

■ Tomorrow Alasdair Murray, right, launches a column exploring the relationship between business and politics

■ Wednesday Janet Bush's look at the world of economics

■ Thursday Martin Waller dissects the latest soundbites from management guru Tom Peters

This week in THE TIMES



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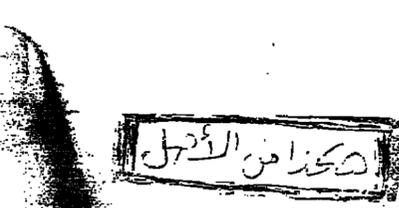
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